ALL-STORY

COMBINED WITH MUNSEY

Love Stories of the American Girl

July 12

20¢ Canada 25¢

Her Bartered Beauty

On Sale Every Other Wednesday

Digitized by Google

Not one out of ten escapes this social fault

Can you be sure that you never have halitosis (unpleasant breath)? Are you certain at this very moment, that you are free of it?

The insidious thing about this unforgivable social fault is that you, yourself, never know when you have it; the victim simply cannot detect it.

Remember, also, that anyone is likely to be troubled, since conditions capable of causing halitosis arise frequently in even normal mouths.

Fermenting food particles, defective or decaying teeth, pyorrhea, catarrh, and slight infections in the mouth, nose, and throat—all produce odors. You can get rid of these odors instantly by gargling and rinsing the mouth with full strength Listerine. Every morning. Every night. And between times before meeting others. Listerine halts fermentation because it is an antiseptic. It checks infection because it is a remarkable germicide.* And it quickly overcomes odors because it is a rapid and powerful deodorant. Lambert Pharmacal Company, St. Louis, Mo., U. S. A.

LISTERINE *ends* halitosis

*Though safe to use in any body cavity, full strength Listerine kills even the Staphylococcus Aureus (pus) and Bacillus Typhosus (typhoid) germs in counts ranging to 200,000,000 in 15 seconds (fastest time accurately recorded by science).

"Four Raises in Two Years"

"AND it hasn't been hard to get them, either. Why, it seems only yesterday that I was wondering if I would ever make as much as $45 a week. And now I'm making $75.

"Tom Dawson was speaking about it today. 'Gee,' he said, 'I wish I had started studying with the I. C. S. when you did. Here I am plugging away at the same old job and the same old salary while you've gone 'way up. I bet you're making twice as much as I am. And to think that two years ago we were working side by side.'

"I told him it wasn't too late if he would only make the start and he said he was going to send in one of those I. C. S. coupons right away.

"I hope he does, because an I. C. S. course is the very thing he needs to get out of the rut. I wouldn't be making anywhere near $75 a week if I hadn't started to study just when I did."

Thousands of men now know the joy of happy, prosperous homes because they let the International Correspondence Schools prepare them in spare time for bigger work.

You will find them in city, town and country—in offices, factories, shops, stores, mines and mills—on farms and on railroads. There are clerks who became Advertising Managers, Salesmen and Executives—carpenters who became Architects and Contractors—mechanics who became Engineers and Electrical experts—men and boys who rose from nothing at all to splendid, responsible positions.

One hour after supper each night, spent with the I. C. S. in the quiet of your own home, will prepare you for the position you want in the work you like best.

This is all we ask: Without cost, without obligating yourself in any way, put it up to us to prove how we can help you. Just mark and mail this coupon for full particulars.

Mail Coupon for Free Booklet

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
"The Universal University"
Box 2137-E, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, "Who Wins and Why," and full particulars about the subject *before* which I have marked X in the list below:

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

☐ Electrical Engineering	☐ Architect
☐ Electric Lighting	☐ Architects' Blueprints
☐ Mechanical Engineer	☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Mechanical Draftsman	☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Machine Shop Practice	☐ Structural Draftsman
☐ Railroad Positions	☐ Concrete Builder
☐ Gas Engine Operating	☐ Structural Engineer
☐ Civil Engineer ☐ Coal Mining	☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
☐ Surveying and Mapping	☐ Automobile Work
☐ Plumbing and Heating	☐ Aviation Engines
☐ Steam Engineering	☐ Agriculture ☐ Navigation
	☐ Mathematics ☐ Radio

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

☐ Business Management	☐ Salesmanship
☐ Industrial Management	☐ Advertising
☐ Personnel Management	☐ Business Correspondence
☐ Traffic Management	☐ Show Card and Sign Lettering
☐ Accounting and C. P. A. Coaching	☐ Stenography and Typing
	☐ English ☐ Civil Service
☐ Cost Accounting	☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ Bookkeeping	☐ Grade School Subjects
☐ Secretarial Work	☐ High School Subjects
☐ Spanish ☐ French	☐ Illustrating ☐ Cartooning

Name.....

Street Address.....

City.....State.....

Occupation.....

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

ALL-STORY

Combined with MUNSEY

Volume VI—No. 1 — *Love Stories of the American Girl* — July 12, 1930

Novelette and Short Stories :

Love's Derby ..... Mary Strother Chambers 1
Would treachery be first over the icy trail to claim her waiting heart?

Nora Makes Bold ..... Barbara Bliss 19
Her family ruined her romance. So Nora laid her own plans

The Battle of Flowers ..... Daisy Dalyrimple 64
Love lurked in the heart of a rose when Winnie bought a flower shop

Glad Rags ..... Edward C. Davies 80
Men called her "party girl." Would no one understand?

The Price of Her Dreams ..... Dawn O'Day 96
Daring brought her within reach of her goal. Then—her dream bubble burst

A Real Life Romance ..... Dorothy Dayton 118
Cupid scores another victory

Love at a Glance ..... J. U. Giesy 122
Her taunts led him into dire peril. Was she quitter or—

The Green-Eyed Monster ..... Isobel Lovering 133
"You have power to kindle deathless love," he told her. Was it to be her curse?

Serial :

Her Bartered Beauty (In Three Parts—Part II) ..... Beulah Poynter 33
Vengeance spins a tightening web of tragedy about Cinderella Mittie

Also—

Planets of Destiny ..... Carol Young 145
Consult your stars

Handwriting and Happiness ..... John Fraser 149
Let graphology find your true mate or your true career

Heart-to-Heart ..... Agnes Merion Morton 153
A friend in need

The Lonesome Club ..... Dorothea Dale 157
Friends await every one

The next issue of ALL-STORY on the stands July 23

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK,

MESSAGERIES HACHETTE
3, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4

PARIS: HACHETTE & CIE.,
111 Rue Réaumur

WILLIAM T. DEWART, President

C. T. DIXON, Vice-President

Published every other Wednesday and copyright, 1930, by The Frank A. Munsey Company. Single copies, 20 cents. By the year, $4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; $7.00 to Canada and Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered. Entered as second-class matter November 25, 1896, at the post-office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright, and must not be reprinted without the publishers' permission. Title registered in U. S. Patent Office. Copyrighted in Great Britain.

Manuscripts submitted to this Magazine should be accompanied by sufficient postage for their return if found unavailable. The publisher can accept no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts.

She was still a little frightened, until he kissed her. Then she knew she had not made a mistake

Love's Derby

Hot blood raced black treachery over a frozen trail to victory and a girl's heart found its rightful owner at the finish line

By Mary Strother Chambers

A GOOD many pairs of admiring eyes followed Jane Loughlin and the tall, dark young man as they danced in the ballroom of the Tahoe Tavern.

"Gad!" said one gentleman, "you wouldn't think, to see that girl now, that she had entered a dog team in the derby, would you? She looks too fragile. She looks like a lady."

And he continued to watch Jane admiringly.

But Jane was utterly unaware of his or any one else's scrutiny. She was unconscious of anything at that moment save this amazingly attractive young man with whom she was dancing and whose name she did not even know.

He was not a handsome young man.

He was tall, and he was tanned; his eyes were hazel and his mouth was firm. Like all other men in the room he wore dinner clothes, and, unlike many, he wore them well. He had entered the ballroom rather late in the evening, and Jane's heart had turned a strange little flip-flop that had sent a telltale flush mounting to her cheeks. Then he had smiled from across the room, tentatively, and Jane had smiled back, shyly. After that it was only a matter of a few strides, and he stood before her.

"This is my dance, isn't it?" he had asked.

His voice was young, and had a hint of laughter in it. Jane's blood had tingled at the sound of it.

"Yes," she had answered, and had slipped into the young man's waiting arms.

"I never, in all my days," said he, after a step or two, "saw such eyes as yours. They're like the first, shining glimmer of the evening star."

"I never, in all my days," said Jane, holding the corners of her mouth straight with an effort, "saw a man with a tongue like yours."

And they both laughed, joyously and with delicious understanding.

Jane, because of a prick of fear in her heart, was the first to become prosaic.

"Have you just arrived?" she asked.

He nodded. "Came up for the derby."

Jane flushed. What would he think if he knew why she was there? Would he still wax poetical about the eyes of the female driver of a dog team? She knew what he was, of course. A young sportsman from down below, with plenty of money to stay at the exclusive Tavern and plenty of time to stop there as long as he liked.

Jane was suddenly filled with thankfulness for the foresight which had made her spend most of her slender funds for a few well-chosen clothes. The evening gown she wore—white, with a shimmer of blue that made it seem fashioned of moonlight, and so low-cut that her neighbors in Langley, Idaho, would have gaped at her in dismay—gave her an air of belonging in the Tavern's sophisticated atmosphere that she could never otherwise have achieved.

And it had given her a chance, for one dance at least, to have this young man talk to her as though she were a girl from his own world. Jane was woefully tired of being treated as a strange and interesting exhibit by the wealthy patrons of Tahoe Tavern.

"Who are you betting on to win the derby?" she asked him with pretended indolence, and because she knew that the betting end of the race was of paramount interest to the idle, bored folk around her.

His hazel eyes twinkled. "On Smith," he said firmly. "And I'll take all comers."

"I'm betting on the Loughlin girl," said Jane. "What makes you think Smith will win?"

"Oh, I have a hunch," he answered airily. He looked smilingly into her eyes and her usually well-controlled heart did another disastrous flip-flop. He laughed when the warm color suffused her face.

"Let's drop all this sordid talk of pelf and canine racing," he said. "It doesn't belong to us. Let's talk about the charming way you blush."

"It's my silly skin," Jane murmured, trying to keep her color down by will power.

"Silly? Your skin?" demanded the young man. "It's the most beautiful

skin I've seen in all my days! It's alabaster and pink pearl. It's—"

"Oh, stop!" cried Jane. "I never heard such extravagant handling of adjectives. Stop talking about my skin!"

"Well, your hair then. Molten gold and flowing copper went into the composition of it. And if a barber ever touches a scissors to it, I'll have him arrested for mayhem."

"It's an awful bother when—" said Jane, and stopped short. "When I'm driving my dogs," she had intended to say.

"You're lazy," said the young man accusingly. "Just plain lazy. Laziness is the only reason girls bob their hair. Those hundred brush strokes a day beat them."

"I'm not lazy!" denied Jane.

"Yes, you are," he insisted, grinning. "You're lazy and beautiful." He looked down at her and stopped grinning. "You're lazy and beautiful and I'm falling in love with you."

"Nonsense!" said Jane, weakly.

"Not nonsense at all," said the young man firmly. "I'm falling in love with you. I *am* in love with you. I fell in love with you when I stood across the room there and you looked up and I saw the stars in your eyes."

The music had stopped now and the young man grasped Jane's arm possessively and was leading her toward a dimly lighted reading room. "We won't dance any more," he said. "We'll find a cushioned seat and talk until everybody else has gone to bed. Then we'll get an old fellow I know who has fast horses and a big sleigh. We'll go for a breathless ride. Then—"

"Then," said Jane, "I'll be exhausted for lack of sleep and I'll bid you good morning and go to bed."

His face fell. "Oh, must you waste time sleeping?" he asked.

"Silly!" laughed Jane. They sat down on a cushioned seat in a secluded alcove. "If I'm going to do all those ridiculous things," she went on, "at least I should know your name. I might tumble out of this speeding sleigh, and if I did I'd have to scream to you. As they do in books: 'Oh, Bill, save me!' I couldn't just yell, 'Oh, say, save me!' It would sound queer."

The young man grinned. "That's right," he agreed. "So when you yell, yell for Bill."

"All right," said Jane. "And when I do, you shout manfully, 'Don't be afraid, Jane. I'll save you!'"

"Fine," said the young man. He sighed deeply, contentedly. "My gosh," he said, "just suppose, Jane, you hadn't smiled at me when I saw you. Suppose you'd looked scornfully away and I hadn't dared ask you to dance. Wouldn't that have been awful?"

"Why suppose such a thing, Bill?"

"It is a waste of time, isn't it?" he said. "Let's—"

A SHADOW fell suddenly across them. They forsook each other's eyes and looked up. A tall, husky figure in dinner clothes stood scowling at them. An outraged figure.

"Oh, it's you," said Jane.

"I've been hunting all over for you," said "Lash" Barnett accusingly. "This is my dance."

"Of course," said Jane. She stood up. Bill stood up. Jane smiled, forlornly. Bill bowed.

"Thank you for the dance," he said.

Jane did not introduce Lash to Bill. She couldn't. Lash Barnett was a name Bill would recognize immediately. Lash Barnett was the favorite in the dog derby.

"Jane," said Lash crossly, "who was that fellow?"

"I—I don't know," said Jane.

"Weren't you introduced to him?" demanded Lash. His voice was harsh. It reminded Jane of his nickname, though it wasn't his way of talking that had given that to him. It was the short, sharp whistle he gave his dogs, a whistle that sounded like the snap of a whip.

"Of course I wasn't introduced, Lash," protested Jane. "Introductions don't mean much here. Not just now. Everybody sees everybody else all the time and doesn't bother about introductions."

"I never saw that fellow before," said Lash.

Jane was silent. No use saying she had never seen him before either. Lash was very jealous of her.

Not that he had any right to be. Of course, they'd been friends for years. Lash owned the ranch next to her father's. Jane knew the people around Langley called them sweethearts. But they weren't sweethearts yet. And it wasn't Lash's fault.

"Better be careful," said Lash. "Any of these young swells up here would get a kick out of playing around with you. You're a new kind of girl to them. But they don't mean anything, you know."

Pain stabbed at Jane's heart. "I know, Lash," she said. "You don't need to tell me."

Lash laughed. "I reckon I don't," he asserted. "And I guess I was kind of nasty to you, Jane. I didn't mean to be. But I'm jealous of you. You're prettier to-night than I ever saw you, Jane."

Jane suddenly felt sorry for Lash. He loved her and she could never love him. But he didn't realize it yet. She hadn't realized it herself before. She smiled up at him.

"I'm having a good time here, Lash," she said. "Don't be cross when I dance with other men. It's only for a few days. Then we'll go home and it will all be over."

Lash's mouth was a little hard. "Yes," he said. "It will all be over. I wonder who will take the purse back to Langley, Jane. You or me."

"How about this Smith?" asked Jane.

Lash shook his head. "I don't know," he said. "He's from Montana. He hasn't arrived yet. I hear he has a team of malemutes. And they're supposed to be good."

"Perhaps," said Jane, "the purse will go to Montana, then."

Lash shook his head. "You and I have two of the best teams in the country," he said. "We ought to clean up. One of us first place, the other second."

"Who's backing Smith?" Jane asked.

"Nobody. He's free-lancing, as we are."

Several other men wanted to dance with Jane Loughlin. They kept her busy until midnight. The last dance was over and Jane hadn't seen Bill again. She walked toward the elevators slowly, by herself. She'd begged off when Lash wanted her to stay up and talk awhile.

She rang the elevator bell, feeling very tired and discouraged. She wished the race was over, so she could go home. She wished—

"Oh, Jane!" It was Bill's voice, close behind her. "Don't go up yet. I've been looking all over for you. How about that sleigh ride?"

Jane turned around. "Where have you been?" she demanded bluntly, out of her recent disappointment.

"Had a phone call from San Fran-

cisco," said Bill. "The connection got all balled up. I was on that phone almost an hour."

Jane could smile again and she did so. "Well," she said, "I'd given you up for lost."

Bill looked at her despairingly. "What else," he demanded, "do I have to say to convince you that I'll always be around when you want me?"

"Stop!" said Jane. "You're going too fast. You bewilder me. Stop!"

"You'd make a good traffic signal," grinned Bill. "Well, do we go sleighing?"

"I'd love to," said Jane.

THE sleigh was piled with fur robes. A befurred, muffled figure sat in front and gripped the reins of two prancing horses. Bill stood beside the sleigh and helped her in.

"Where shall we drive?" he asked.

Jane looked down the trail ahead, where the snow gleamed in the moonlight. She raised her face and breathed deeply of the cold, bracing air.

"Oh, anywhere," she said.

Bill turned to the driver. "Go down the Truckee trail a half dozen miles or so," he ordered. "Then turn around and come back again."

"Twelve miles!" cried Jane.

"What's twelve miles," asked Bill, "when you and I are sleighing?"

He jumped in beside her and pulled the robes tightly over them both. He put his arm along the back rest behind her, and let his mittened hand just touch her shoulder.

"Let's go," he said.

The driver touched the horses with the tip of the whip. They sprang down the trail. Snow flew from their speeding hoofs. The sleigh slipped swiftly over the frozen surface.

Jane leaned back and closed her eyes and let the icy wind sting her cheeks.

"Like it?" asked Bill.

"Love it," she said.

"Daughters of the Vikings," said Bill, "love swiftness and the northern wind against their faces."

"Am I a daughter of the Vikings?" asked Jane.

"Look at yourself in your mirror," he counseled. "The Skeleton in Armor might have fled with a girl like you."

"My coloring is from a Scotch, not a Nordic ancestry," said Jane, and immediately held her breath. Would he ask her last name?

He didn't. His hazel eyes were intent on the trail ahead. "A sharp curve, this," he said suddenly.

Jane nodded. "It's the worst place in the derby course."

"An ideal spot for a bit of rough stuff," he commented thoughtfully. "Out of sight of the railroad as it is."

This was dangerous ground. "Oh, well," said Jane, "I guess there won't be any rough stuff in this derby. I haven't heard that there is much big money behind any of the drivers."

"No, I suppose not," said Bill. He was still thoughtful, though. But after a while he turned sparkling eyes to Jane. In the clear moonlight his face was keen and boyish.

"And they say romance is dead!" he cried. "When we can fly along like this!"

"At one in the morning," added Jane.

He was suddenly anxious. "Any one who will worry about you back there at the Tavern?" he questioned. "Or is there any one who has the right to worry about you at any time? Outside of your parents or guardians?"

Jane colored a little. "No one," she confessed softly.

"That's fine," said Bill. "Then there's only me. And if I'm with you all the time, I can't worry about you, can I?"

"Who," questioned Jane, "gave you the right to worry about me?"

"I'm taking it," said Bill. He looked down into her eyes. "Do you mind?"

Jane stirred restlessly. To-morrow, when he found out, would he want that right? She tried to avoid his gaze. "No, I don't mind," she said.

The laugh went out of Bill's eyes. "That," he said, "almost amounts to a confession. Can you possibly be falling in love, too?"

"To-night," thought Jane, "is to-night. And I'll never have another night like this. To-morrow I'll be Jane Loughlin: a curiosity on exhibit for people like Bill."

"I can't state positively," she said, "whether I'm falling in love or not. I've never fallen in love. But if the books I've read describe the process correctly—"

"Yes?" said Bill quietly.

Jane felt very weak and very feminine and very frightened. "I—I'm afraid I am," she finished softly.

BILL'S arm gripped her shoulders then. He turned her about until she was facing him and there was no sign of laughter in his earnest eyes. "You wouldn't fool me, would you?" he asked huskily.

Jane shook her head. "Not ever," she said.

She was still a little frightened until he kissed her. Then she knew she had not made a mistake. This man, impossible as it might seem, loved her. Jane knew enough about kisses to know that. A man, if he was playing, didn't kiss a girl, not even for the first time, with something akin to timidity. He didn't kiss her that way unless he loved her, unless he was a little overwhelmed by the possession of her lips.

Jane yielded herself joyously then to the clasp of Bill's arms. She returned his kisses eagerly and thrilled to his murmured caresses.

"You darling!" he said unsteadily after a while. He had raised his head and was holding her tightly against his shoulder. "Jane, it doesn't seem possible. When you looked at me across the room back there, I knew then that you were my girl. I was just as certain of it as though I had known you all my life. But to have you feel the same way about me—" He broke off, to look at her sharply. "You do feel the same way about me, don't you?"

"Yes," whispered Jane, and tried to forget that a morrow existed.

He kissed her again. And he laughed, joyfully. "Well, that's that," he said.

Soon they were on the way back to the Tavern. The black sea that was Lake Tahoe glistened darkly in the moonlight. Jane sighed.

"One more day and bedlam breaks loose," she said.

"What bedlam?" asked Bill.

"Oh, the dog derby. And people talking and shouting and making bets. And conversation about dogs. Day and night conversation about dogs."

"Don't you like dogs?" asked Bill.

Jane quenched the enthusiasm that rose within her. "Oh, they're all right," she said.

Bill was silent for a while. "What about this Loughlin girl?" he asked finally.

"Why, I don't know. What about her?"

"Has she arrived yet?"

"I believe she has. I think I've seen her around."

"What kind of a team has she?"

"Irish setters, I believe."

"Oh, yes," said Bill. "A fast team, aren't they?"

"I think they're supposed to be."

Bill nodded. "This Barnett, now," he asked. "His dogs are malemutes, aren't they?"

Jane nodded.

"He and the Loughlin girl are from Idaho some place, I've heard. Been racing dogs for years. Barnett's team should be pretty good."

Jane forced a laugh. "If you don't look out, Bill, you'll be talking yourself into betting on Barnett."

Bill shook his head. "Nope. I've a hunch that Smith from Montana is going to win."

Jane was unable longer to appear disinterested. "Why do you think that?" she demanded.

"I don't know. He has a team of powerful malemutes. They're all strong, husky young dogs. He's won every race in Montana."

"And either Barnett or Miss Loughlin have won every race in Idaho!" said Jane promptly.

Bill laughed. "It looks like a toss-up. But what has it to do with us?"

The dimmed lights of the Tavern were in sight. He caught her to him again. And Jane kissed him with all the ardor of her vibrant young being. After all, it might be their last kiss.

The sleigh came to a halt. Bill helped Jane out. They walked slowly into the lobby of the Tavern. A sleepy elevator man started the lift.

"Don't sleep too late, will you, Jane?" Bill asked.

"I probably won't sleep at all," Jane said. And laughed for his benefit.

"Check," he grinned. "Say, Jane. What's your last name? When I wake up in the morning, I can't just ask the telephone operator for Jane's room."

The elevator had stopped at Jane's floor. She drew a long breath. Then she looked straight into Bill's eyes.

"My last name is Loughlin," she said clearly.

She caught a last glimpse of Bill's amazed face as the elevator slipped upward.

"Curtain," said Jane wearily. Then she unlocked her door.

THE next morning she was up early. She had slept scarcely at all. She dressed slowly. A short pleated skirt, a becoming blue sweater, a hand-woven béret to match. Except for her sturdy, waterproof boots, she looked like a college girl. She regarded herself in the mirror.

"I'm as good looking as any college girl, too," she told herself honestly. "But I don't suppose that will make any difference. I'm a hard-boiled, uncultured woman from the wilds of Idaho. I must be. I drive a dog team in derbies."

She went down to breakfast. Lash Barnett was waiting for her in the lobby.

"You look keen, Jane," he said.

"Thanks," Jane smiled and started toward the dining room.

She was quiet during breakfast. She felt Lash's speculative black eyes upon her, but she didn't care.

"What's the matter, kid?" he asked after a while. "You haven't any pep."

"I didn't get much sleep," said Jane thoughtlessly.

Lash's eyes narrowed. "No? You went to bed at midnight."

Jane shook her head. She didn't feel like lying. "I didn't go to bed at midnight," she said. "I went at four o'clock this morning."

"Between twelve and four," said Lash quietly, "what were you doing?"

"Enjoying a sleigh ride," said Jane.

"With that rich young whelp you fell for last night, I suppose?"

"Uh-huh." Jane buttered a bit of toast and did not glance at Lash. She didn't need to. She knew how he looked when he was jealous.

"Jane, I told you—" he began in an outraged voice.

"Listen, Lash." She cut him short. Her voice was cool. "You have no right to tell me anything. Did you ever think of that?"

"No right!" gasped Lash.

"Well, have you?"

"Aren't you as good as engaged to me?"

"I don't think so."

"But—but Jane, I've always thought that some day you were going to marry me."

"Did you ever ask me in order to find out?"

Lash looked at her for a moment. His black eyes wore a bewildered expression that made her miserable. But after all, this thing might as well be settled now.

"No," said Lash after a while. "I guess I never did exactly ask you. Are you going to marry me, Jane?"

"No," said Jane. "I'm sorry, Lash, but I'm not."

"That city squirt has cut me out, I suppose?" Lash's tone was edged.

Jane shook her head. "I just don't love you. I'm sorry."

She rose from the table. "I think I'll go out and feed my dogs," she said.

"I'll be along in a minute," said Lash. "Don't feed 'em too much, Jane. To-morrow's the beginning of a long grind, you know."

Jane nodded. It was nice of Lash to be considerate of her dogs when she was racing against him. But then, he was always like that.

She went out to the kennels. Her nine Irish setters, their healthy red coats glistening in the beams of the winter sun, greeted her joyously. She went into the wire enclosure and gave them their feed.

Other barks attracted her attention. She glanced around. Lash's dogs were quiet. So were the dogs of the other racers. The barking came from around the corner. It must be Dennis Smith's dogs, Jane decided. She might as well go around and have a look at them.

She walked slowly around the corner of the kennels. She saw a strange team of dogs, malemutes. They were leaping about a tall straight figure who stood in the center of their enclosure. The figure was a man's and the man had dark brown hair and laughing hazel eyes.

Jane stopped short.

THE man turned around. "Hello there," he called. "I was wondering when you'd put in an appearance." He was laughing and there were pleasant little wrinkles around his eyes.

Jane drew a long breath. "Bill!" she said.

Bill laughed again. "Come on in and meet the pups," he invited.

Jane entered the enclosure. The dogs looked at her suspiciously a moment and then stood quietly, accepting her presence. She regarded their master coldly.

"I thought your name was Bill," she said.

"It is," he answered. "Dennis William Smith. That's Bill, isn't it?"

Jane refused to smile. "Why didn't you tell me who you were?"

"Why," he countered, "didn't you tell me who you were?"

"I—I thought you were—oh, one

of the numerous onlookers around here," Jane said.

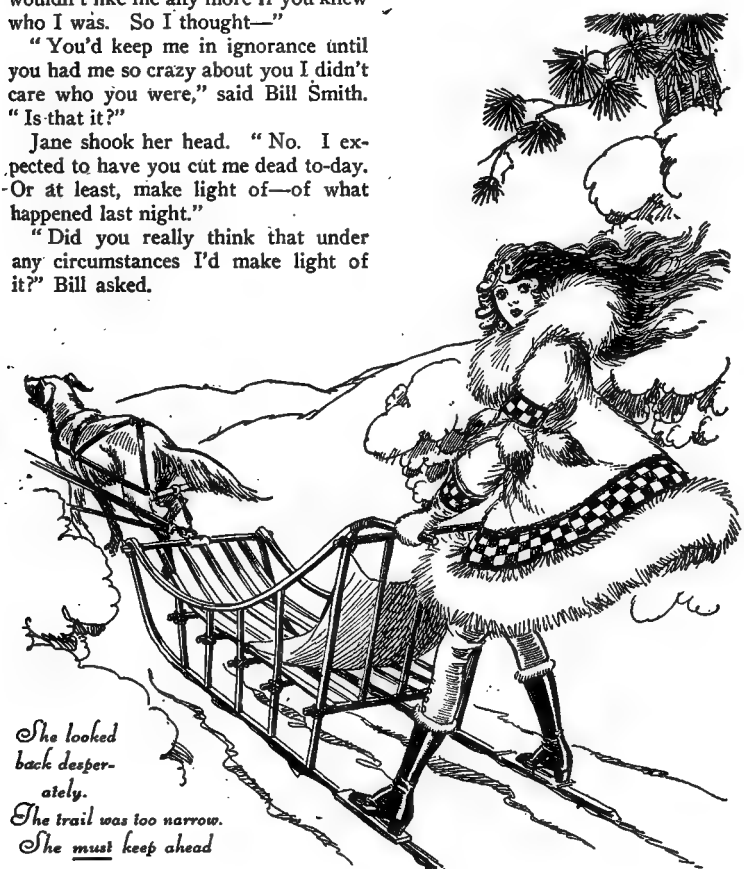
"The same to you," Bill grinned.

"I thought," said Jane, "that you wouldn't like me any more if you knew who I was. So I thought—"

"You'd keep me in ignorance until you had me so crazy about you I didn't care who you were," said Bill Smith. "Is that it?"

Jane shook her head. "No. I expected to have you cut me dead to-day. Or at least, make light of—of what happened last night."

"Did you really think that under any circumstances I'd make light of it?" Bill asked.



She looked back desperately. The trail was too narrow. She must keep ahead

For the first time Jane smiled. "I —I hoped you wouldn't," she said.

He stepped closer to her. The dogs jumped upon him unheeded.

"And if you intend to make light of it," he said, "I'll put myself down as being the poorest judge of human nature in existence."

"You're not a poor judge, Bill," said Jane. She stepped back before the gleam in his eyes.

"Everybody in this hotel," she said, "comes out about this time to inspect the dogs. Also the drivers. If they

saw you doing what I suspect you intend to do, it would cause a scandal in the annual Tahoe derby. If I should win or you should win, we'd be accused of throwing the race!"

"I don't care what they think," said Bill. But he looked around, nevertheless. And saw that Jane was right. They had quite a numerous audience. He sighed.

"Well," he said, "we don't have to stay here all day."

Jane smiled. "No, we don't."

He finished feeding his dogs and they strolled toward the Tavern. On the porch they encountered Lash. Jane stopped short.

"You are two men who should know one another," she said. "Lash, this is Dennis Smith. Otherwise known as 'Bill.' Bill, my friend and fellow racer, Lash Barnett."

The two men shook hands. Lash's tan face was as stoical as an Indian's.

"Glad to know you, Smith," he said. "I hear you have a fine team."

"I hear the same about you," laughed Bill.

"My team is swell, too," said Jane.

They all laughed. Then, after a short exchange of words, Lash excused himself and departed for the kennels. Jane watched him go with a certain anxiety, despite her lightness of heart. She had seen that determined gleam in his black eyes before.

IT was just before noon when Jane, who was powdering her nose preparatory to going in to lunch, heard a knock at her door.

"Who is it?" she called.

"Lash. Can I come in a minute?"

"Couldn't you wait until lunch?"

"No. I have to see you alone."

Jane opened the door. "Well, come on in, then."

He closed the door behind him and put a paper parcel on a table. He looked at Jane steadily for a moment.

"Listen, Jane," he said, "you've been in a lot of races with me. I always play the game straight, don't I?"

She nodded. "Yes, you do."

"Well, then, listen to me now. This race is a big affair, Jane. The winner's purse of twenty-five hundred dollars is only the small end of it."

"You're talking about the betting, I suppose."

"Sure. Everybody's betting on this race. Most of the people around the Tavern are rich people and are just betting for the fun of it. They're straight. But there's a bunch of Reno gamblers up here who aren't so straight. And they're betting on Dennis Smith! The race is in the bag, Jane. And your friend Smith is scheduled to win it."

"How do you know, Lash?"

"A fellow I met last year in Reno tipped me off. He's got the dope, Jane. He knows that Reno crowd. They wanted him to throw in with them because he's a wealthy man and has a pretty good reputation in betting circles. But he says they're too crooked for him."

"But he could be mistaken," insisted Jane. "Anyhow I don't see how the race could be fixed. A single heat might. But three heats, Lash! And on a course that is in full view of the railroad practically every foot of the way. Why, those cars will be loaded with watchers. And most of them will have powerful glasses, too. Nobody could get away with any crooked stuff. And Bill himself is straight!"

Lash turned to the parcel he had put on the table. As he unwrapped it, he said casually:

"Did Smith mention how he was betting on the race?"

Jane turned a little cold. "Y-yes," she said. "He's betting on himself, naturally. You're betting on yourself, Lash. And I guess my father is betting on me. There's nothing queer about that."

Lash opened the parcel. "Take a look at this," he said.

JANE crossed over to him. Ten or twelve chunks of dog meat lay on the brown paper. Lash picked one up and pressed it. Jane could see that it had been partially split. In the center of the cut lay a little white pellet.

Jane's face paled. "Where did you find this package, Lash?"

"On a bench by the kennels."

"Whose is it?"

"Well, I couldn't say for sure," Lash replied, "but I saw Dennis Smith put it there."

Jane caught the edge of the table. "Lash!" she cried. "I don't believe it. It can't be true!"

Lash shook his head. "Sorry, kid, but it is true. I met him when I was coming in from the kennels. He had this package under his arm. When he saw me he laid it on the bench. We stood talking a while, and he asked me to come up for a minute and talk to the promoter. He was having some kind of trouble with one of the entries. I went along with him, but when I had a chance I excused myself and slipped back to the kennels. The package was still on the bench and I picked it up. It's his all right."

"But, Lash," Jane protested feebly. "How do you know this meat is—is poisoned? How do you know it isn't some tonic he's feeding his dogs?"

"I don't know," said Lash. "And there's no time now to send it down and have it analyzed. But he fed his dogs this morning. Why give them a lot of raw meat at noon? Besides, why did he put the parcel down when he saw me? And get me, as he supposed, out of the way? No, Jane, I'm afraid your boy friend is far from square."

Jane nodded slowly. "I guess you're right," she said. "I've—I've always been able to trust you, Lash. I—guess—you're right."

Lash rolled up the parcel. "I'll just keep this," he said. "It might come in handy."

"What can you do?" asked Jane dully.

"Nothing now. But I'll keep my eyes open. And if anything breaks, I'll be ready."

Jane nodded. "I—I don't want any lunch, Lash," she said brokenly. "You'll excuse me, won't you?"

"Sure," said Lash. "I'll have a tray sent up."

"I couldn't eat," said Jane.

"All right, honey." Lash's arm pressed her shoulders for an instant. "I'll leave you alone. You need time to get squared around. Let me know when you want to see me."

He closed the door softly behind him. Jane walked over to the dresser and looked at her reflection in the mirror. It showed her a white-faced girl whose eyes held not the slightest trace of starriness. A girl whose mouth was drawn with pain.

"Heavens!" she said shakily. "I look ghastly. I can't go downstairs. I'll just—I'll just lie down and make myself go to sleep."

Lash called for her before dinner. He had hold of her arm and was guiding her toward the dining room when they saw Bill Smith. He started toward them eagerly. Jane looked Bill Smith straight in the eye. She looked at him as though she had never seen him before. She looked at him as

though she never cared to see him again. She saw the laughter go out of his hazel eyes. And she pretended she had never known there could be laughter in them.

JANE drew first place for start in the Tahoe derby. Lash drew fourth and Dennis Smith seventh. Jane felt that she was lucky. First place and a fair start would give her a good break. Her setters, she knew, were the fastest dogs in the race, though they did not have the endurance of the malemutes Lash and Smith were racing. A little speed at the beginning should give her a long lead.

Her danger, she knew, would be in the last few miles of the return trip from Truckee to the Tavern, when her dogs would be tired. That was the time when the huskier malemutes might pass her.

Well, she didn't care if Lash won the first day's race. But Smith must not be allowed to win it. She and Lash, if possible, must hold first and second place. Let Smith have third if he wanted it. She hoped that some of the other entrants might nose him out. However, she knew there was little chance of that. She and Lash and Smith had, she was sure, the only real teams.

The weather, too, was ideal. Clear and cold and a hard crust on the snow. Fine for her speedy dogs, and no need to worry about exhaustion from wallowing through soft drifts.

She swung her team into place and stood there behind the sled, her mittened hands grasping the handles. The throng of spectators cheered wildly.

Jane smiled at them perfunctorily. She thought there was no special acclaim attached to the applause. She had no idea what a picture she and her team made—the dogs, their red coats like burnished copper, straining at the harness; the girl, in her heavy fur parka, that was burnished copper too, standing straight and tense behind her sled. She was far too intent upon listening for the report of the starter's gun to pay attention to applause.

The shouts died to a breathless silence as the starter asked if she was ready. The report of his gun, when it came, sounded like a thunderbolt on the hushed air. Jane's ringing shout was almost simultaneous:

"Mush, Donner! Mush!"

The lead dog sprang forward. Jane ran behind the sled, calling now to this animal, now to that. The team swung easily into a swift stride. A few yards, and Jane jumped on the sled. She was off—and to a good start.

The miles of frozen snow were covered with surprising swiftness. For five miles Jane held her dogs to their top pace. Then she glanced back over the course.

She saw two teams behind her; Lash's and Bill's, they must be. But they were well behind. She didn't have to worry yet. She slowed her team and ran for a space behind the sled.

The train carrying the spectators was keeping pace with her along the railroad track. Shouts of encouragement reached her from time to time. And bellowed demands to Lash or to Bill or to the other racers to speed up.

A few miles more, and Jane glanced back again. A racing team of malemutes was coming up swiftly. She faced forward and shouted to her dogs: "Mush! Mush! Mush, Donner!"

She reached Truckee and turned sharply for the return trip. Less than a quarter of a mile out she passed Lash. He waved to her and she saw

his white teeth flash in a cheerful grin. A few yards more and she came to Bill Smith's team. His malemutes were racing as though for their lives, and the glimpse she had of Bill's face as they passed showed it white and strained.

THE return trip was harder at first. Lash kept close at her heels. He was compelling her to force her dogs. He knew her team as well as she. Fast, but without the stamina of his malemutes.

But the setters were excited and in good form. They speeded over the ground like animals possessed. And Jane knew that, though Lash's team was doing its best, it could not pass her that day.

When she had almost reached the Tavern, she slowed her dogs and glanced back down the trail. She was amazed when she saw how far behind Lash was. Of Bill Smith there was no sign.

She let her dogs trot until they were in sight of the Tavern. No use wearing them out this first day. Then she was startled to hear a wild shout behind her. One quick glance over her shoulder and she cried to her dogs sharply. A team of malemutes was almost at her heels.

The setters tore along the trail. Spectators were pouring from the train, running toward the finish, and shouting as they ran. For the first time during the race, Jane's whip cracked over the backs of her team.

The snow flew beneath the speeding feet. Breathless with running, Jane leaped on the sled. The setters, their tongues lolling from their mouths, their panting breath like smoke on the cold air, bounded across the finish line. Then with one accord they headed to one side and dropped on the snow.

Jane sprang to the ground and whirled around. The team of malemutes was but a scant ten yards behind her. The excited dogs ran past her sled and Jane stared in astonishment. It was a blue sled, not a red one, that the malemutes pulled. Bill Smith, not Lash, had won second place of the first day's heat!

Jane stared anxiously down the course. She could see another team heading toward the finish. It was coming fast, but not as fast as Lash's dogs could run. Jane held her breath. Had Lash had trouble? Had some one else passed him on the trail?

But it was Lash's team that crossed the line next. A team without a lead dog. Lash had had to cut his leader out. It sat dejectedly before him on the sled, head bowed, as though feeling keenly this undeserved disgrace.

Lash leaped to the ground. His eyes met Jane's. "Went lame," he shouted. "About four miles back."

"Too bad," Jane called. "Better luck to-morrow."

The crowd closed in between them. Congratulations flew thick and fast. Jane smiled until her face ached, shook hands until her fingers were stiff. And had her shoulders pounded until they were sore. Oh, well, a man's game, a man's acclaim!

After a while she was able to draw away from the crowd. She went over to her team, roused them up. She patted their heads and they wagged tired tails gratefully. As she was coming back from the kennels she met Lash, who was bringing his team in. The unharnessed dog was trotting beside the sled.

"Good work, Jane," Lash said.

"Thanks," said Jane. "I'm sorry you weren't second."

"Not half as sorry as I am." Lash

smiled ruefully. "I'll see you pretty soon, Jane. When I tend to this fellow's foot."

Jane glanced after the unharnessed dog. He had run ahead of the others when Lash stopped to talk. As far as Jane could see—he had *nothing wrong* with any of his feet! He didn't even limp.

Oh, well, Lash knew his business. If he thought a dog couldn't run, it couldn't run. Lash wouldn't cut it out unnecessarily.

IT was well into the afternoon when her telephone rang. Lash's voice answered her "Hello."

"Can I come up, Jane?"

"Well, I'll be down pretty soon."

"But it's important."

Jane sighed. More grief, she thought.

"All right," she said. "Give me fifteen minutes."

She slipped out of her dressing-gown and put on a dress. She had scarcely finished fastening it when Lash knocked at the door.

"What now?" she asked, as she opened it.

Lash came inside and held out his hand, palm upward. "Look at this."

A long slender thorn lay in his hand. Jane looked up at him.

"From Hobo's foot?" she asked.

Lash nodded.

"Oh, Lash," said Jane wearily. "Can't we do something?"

Lash shrugged. "What, Jane? All I have to report is circumstantial evidence. What that Reno fellow told me. The package of meat I found. This thorn. All damned suspicious. All convincing when you put them together. But not proof."

Jane nodded. "Well, there's nothing to do but win anyhow," she said.

Lash's face was serious. "That sounds fine, Jane. You've won to-day. But suppose you have a little accident to-morrow?"

"Well, but one of us surely would have a chance. They wouldn't dare put us both out at once."

"No," said Lash, "that would be too raw. But still, say you drop behind to-morrow. Say I win. That leaves second place for Smith again. And if his dogs can repeat to-day's performance, I may not be able to hold him to second place. In either case, first or second, he'll make better time than either of us. The same cute little game in the third heat, a trifling accident to one of us, and he wins the derby. It's damned clever, Jane."

THE second day of the race was very much like the first. Only it was Jane instead of Lash who came in a straggling third. A new, doubly strong harness had parted when the Irish setters were within five miles of Tahoe Tavern. And Lash Barnett had won the heat. His malemutes had proved themselves faster by two minutes and a half than Bill Smith's. But when the times of the two heats were added, it was found that the three leaders were only seconds apart. Lash examined the broken harness after the race. He showed Jane the two ends. Halfway across both were jagged tears. But the rest of the way were clean cuts.

Jane was nervous the next morning. So much depended on that day. She went out to the kennels early. She looked her dogs over carefully, examined their feet, prodded gently between their toes. No thorns there. No dog flinched beneath her searching fingers.

She looked into their eyes, regarding

each dog earnestly. All were bright, healthy, alert. No feverish eyeballs, no heavy lids. And no warm noses, either.

She went over each section of harness carefully, tested the place Lash had mended. It seemed very strong. It would be. Lash knew his business. She even examined the sled, looked for weak runners, for split handles. The sled was strong and sound.

She patted her lead dog thoughtfully. "It's do or die," she told him. "It's up to us to-day."

The largest crowd of the season was gathered at the starting line when Jane and her setters took their places. Excitement ran high among the spectators. Three entries whose time was almost the same! Never had there been such a derby!

Lash pulled his team in behind hers. She heard the yelps of other dogs farther back. She heard Bill Smith's voice as he quieted his dogs. She was furiously angry as she felt the color rise uncontrollably in her cheeks.

"Ready, Miss Loughlin?" The starter's question recalled her to the business in hand. She nodded jerkily, and grasped the handles of her sled.

The gun roared. The setters, as they always did, sprang forward eagerly. Jane shouted to them excitedly, urging them on. Like a part of her, they obeyed her commands. She jumped on to the sled. Her eyes were gleaming. Her lips were parted in a joyous smile. Her hood fell off and her golden hair whipped madly in the wind.

Forgotten was the sordid intrigue of the race. Forgotten was the perfidy of Bill Smith. Forgotten was everything save the thrill of riding behind a racing team, with the cold air stinging her face, and a pack of challenging dogs speeding at her back.

She reached Truckee in record-breaking time. Lash was half a mile behind her when she passed him on the homeward trail. And Bill Smith was in fifth place, almost three-quarters of a mile behind.

Jane knew she had the edge on Lash and all the others. If her dogs could stand the punishment, she would win the race.

Halfway to the Tavern she slowed them down. They were panting heavily now and they had to rest. She gave a quick glance behind her. Both Lash and Bill were in sight, the latter having pulled up into third place. But it couldn't be helped. Her dogs had to have a respite. Even if she had to let one or both of them pass her, her dogs had to rest.

Another backward glance showed her that the two teams of malemutes were almost abreast. Bill Smith's dogs had their noses to the back of Lash's sled. Slowly but surely, they were creeping up.

Ahead of her Jane saw the bad curve Bill had pointed out to her the night they went sleighing, the curve that was out of sight of the spectators' train. It was a narrow curve, not wide enough for more than one sled. She glanced back anxiously. Unless she got past it ahead of both Lash and Bill, she would have to drop to third place.

She jumped off the sled and began to push. "Mush, Donner! Mush!" she shouted wildly.

The lead dog jumped ahead. The other dogs met the pace. Jane's heart thrilled. No shirkers in that team!

She sprang onto the sled again and as she did so she heard the sharp crack of a whip. She threw a swift glance behind. Lash was almost upon her. He was trying to beat her to the turn.

Jane's whip snapped. The setters

tried to respond. But they had run furiously and they were hard-pressed. Lash drew closer, closer. His malemutes had reached her sled. Jane called frantically to her lead dog: "Gee, Donner! Gee!"

She would have to turn out and let Lash beat her to the curve.

BUT Lash's team did not pull ahead. Instead it kept abreast. And Jane was on the outside.

"Gee!" she shouted frantically to the racing dogs. They seemed to be out of control. The nearness of the malemutes had maddened them. "Gee, Donner! Gee!"

What was the matter with Lash? Didn't he know he would crowd her off the course? Well, she wasn't going to roll down that snow bank, Lash or no Lash. It would take her several minutes to get back on the course. She would have to speed up and get around the turn first.

She cracked her whip a g a i n. "Mush!" she cried. "Mush! Mush!"

The setters raced madly along. The malemutes matched them inch for inch. Evidently Lash thought she would give way. Or perhaps he thought he could still beat her to the curve.

But he couldn't. Nose to nose the two teams ate up the short distance between them and the narrow turn. Jane was angry now. Lash wasn't being fair. He could see her dogs were too excited to turn out now. He ought to drop back.

They were almost to the turn. Jane's heart was in her mouth. Her dogs were running away and Lash didn't seem to realize it. She turned her head suddenly, to shout to him. Then her words froze in horror on her lips.

Lash was not looking at her. He was looking at the handles of her sled. And she saw his arm shoot out, his palm open. He was trying to hit her bar and push her over the bank!

Jane screamed wildly. Lash's sled swayed and he missed the bar. Then, unbelievably, he reached for it again.

A long-drawn whistle shrilled through the air. The lash of a whip wrapped itself around Lash's wrist. Jane had one brief glimpse of another racing team, of Bill Smith's white, furious face. Then Lash's team slowed down and Jane whirled around the narrow curve alone.

Jane knew then what she was up against. Lash Barnett had thrown everything aside to win the race! It would take only an instant for him to free himself from Bill Smith's whip. Then he would be after her, determined to beat her to the Tavern. And Bill Smith would be after them both.

There was no time to consider her team. They were young, well-conditioned dogs. They could have a long rest after to-day. But they had to reach the Tavern first!

Her long whip cracked over their backs again and again. And again and again Jane looked back over her shoulder. Finally she saw Bill Smith's team pull abreast of Lash's. She saw Lash's team fighting to keep its place. And she saw Bill Smith pulling slowly but surely ahead.

Her own dogs were slowing down. Despite her shouts, despite her pleadings, despite her whip, they were slowing down. And Bill Smith was gaining on her every second.

They were in sight of the Tavern now. The train had already stopped and the wildly excited crowd was racing toward the finish. Yells and shouts and cheers were ringing through the air.

The faithful setters seemed to sense

what they meant. Victory—and the end of the course. Donner lengthened his stride. The eight dogs behind him matched it. Down the frozen trail they raced, with the noses of Bill Smith's malemutes at their heels.

Jane's hood was off. Her long hair was streaming wildly in the wind. Her voice was hoarse with pleading.

"Mush! Mush! Mush! Donner, mush!"

Donner mushed. With one last, mighty effort he leaped forward. Jane was almost hurled off the sled. And as the hind legs of the last setter crossed the finish line, the forelegs of the first malemute touched it.

Jane's dogs dropped to the ground. And Jane, if a dozen eager hands had not supported her, would have dropped to the ground, too. But she had won the derby!

A great roar went up from the crowd. Jane bundled her hair into her hood with trembling fingers. She looked for one long moment into Bill Smith's eyes. Then the crowd surged in between them as Lash's team crossed the line.

Jane felt that she could not look at Lash. Lash, who said he loved her, and had tried to push her off the trail! But a sudden hush of the shouts and cheering forced her to raise her head.

Bill Smith was walking up to Lash. And there was an expression on his white face that made the crowd fall back before him. Lash stood perfectly still, waiting for the thing he knew must come.

"Barnett," said Bill, and his voice was like the snap of his whip, "that was the dirtiest piece of work I ever saw in my life."

Jane waited to hear no more. She left her team to the willing hands of the Tavern attachés and fled to her room. She couldn't bear to watch Lash's humiliation.

IT was not until after dinner that Bill Smith sought her out. And he found her where she intended he should, in that deeply-cushioned seat in a certain secluded alcove.

When he found her there, he stood a moment and looked down at her. He was smiling a little, but the smile was a bit crooked.

"Well, Jane Loughlin," he said, "don't you think I rate an explanation?"

Jane's eyes were very somber. "Is it you who rates the explanation?" she asked. "I thought I did."

"Didn't you know," asked Bill, "that the race was supposedly in the bag for Barnett?"

Jane caught her breath. "He told me it was in the bag for you," she said.

"For him," Bill said. "I have the proof. He's in with that Reno bunch. But I didn't think he'd double cross you, even at that. Not until I saw what he tried to do to-day."

Jane was very still. "What about the thorn in his dog's foot?" she demanded at last. "What about my cut harness? What about that poisoned meat?"

"What thorn?" Bill Smith asked sharply. "What harness? What meat?"

"Didn't you—"

"Is that why," said Bill Smith slowly, "you refused to speak to me? Did Lash Barnett tell you I did things like that?"

"He made it appear that you must have," said Jane.

Bill sat down beside her. "Listen here, Jane," he said. "Did Lash Barnett make any explanation to you before he left the Tavern?"

"Left the Tavern!" Jane cried. "Has Lash left, Bill?"

"Right after the race," Bill said. "Bag and baggage. And the Reno outfit with him."

Jane's face was white. "But, Bill, I've known him all my life!"

"Well," said Bill gently, "sometimes even life-long friends can't stand the promise of easy money."

"Poor Lash!" said Jane. She turned away from Bill.

"You can cry much more comfortably on my shoulder," said Bill after a while.

"I—I need a handkerchief," said Jane, after a longer while.

Bill proffered one promptly. Soon he was dusting powder on Jane's nose.

"There!" he said. "You look fine. You look sweet enough to kiss." So he kissed her. Then he said earnestly: "Jane, don't you think we've wasted enough time?"

"What—what do you mean?" asked Jane.

"Just what I said," he answered firmly. "We've wasted enough time. There's a train leaving for Reno in half an hour. Can you catch it?"

"Y-yes," said Jane.

He grinned at her happily. "And you don't need to worry," he said. "I do something else for a living besides dog racing. You can have jam and cake every day."

"Grand," said Jane. "We'll spend the twenty-five hundred dollars I won for bread."

"Never," said Bill, "in all my days, have I met a girl like you." He kissed her lingeringly.

"My gosh!" he said. "One more kiss and we'll miss the train. Hurry up, Jane Loughlin. All aboard for Reno. We'll show these Californians what we think of their three-day marriage laws!"

Query

SHALL we let love grow with the summer,
Never reluctant nor spent,
Nor count the cost of the growing;
Daring to be content?
Daring the fire or the embers,
The pain or the joy it may claim—
Shall we let love burn with the summer,
Until it is white-hot flame?

—*Peter A. Lea*

Nora Makes Bold

She burst into tears. Now he would never come again!

With all the best intentions in the world, Nora's loved ones did their best to ruin her romance!

By Barbara Bliss

THE great trial of Caroline Nelson's life was her daughter Nora. Nora was pretty — as pretty, her mother believed, as any girl in Richmond—but she was not popular with either boys or men. In fact, no man or boy had ever called upon her, and, as far as any one could learn, none had ever admired her.

"It's all very well for you to talk," Mrs. Nelson again informed her husband—who, by the way, was not talking at all, but trying to read his paper —"oh, yes, it's all very well for you to talk, but I tell you that the mother of a daughter as undesirable as Nora appears to be feels positively embarrassed before the neighbors."

She deposited a salt shaker upon the dining room table with a soft thud.

Jasper Nelson glanced up from his paper. He was a thin, stoop-shouldered man with mild blue eyes.

"I don't think you should talk like that, mother," he said gently. "Nora is a good and lovely girl. Any parents should be proud of her. She has never given us a day's trouble—"

"Oh, dear," Caroline broke in, "how like a man! You talk as though I didn't appreciate Nora, when you know all the time that what makes me so mad is because the men don't appreciate her."

"But that will come all in good time. The child is young. I have no desire to give her away to any man in a hurry."

"Don't worry," his wife advised, "you won't. Nora is twenty-three and she's never had a beau in her life. I doubt if she ever will have one. She'll be an old maid—that's what she'll be. And I tell you it just breaks my heart. When Sarah West begins to talk to me about Milly's beaux, I could shriek in her face. For it's all true, every word she utters. Milly West has more admirers than she knows what to do with; yet she isn't really as pretty as Nora."

"Well," Jasper pacifically suggested, "perhaps Milly is a little more bold than our Nora; that explains it."

"It may explain it, but it doesn't excuse it. Don't you realize that if Nora had any sense she'd be a little bolder than she is, instead of acting, every time a man comes into view, as though she had just escaped from the nursery."

"I don't want Nora bold," Jasper said with, for him, unusual decision. "She acts all right with men. See how natural she is with Bob."

"Well, Bob is her cousin and he's been here a month. It's taken Nora all that time to get used to him, too. She hadn't an idea what on earth to talk to him about when he arrived. I did think, when Bob first came, that he might do the child some good, but I don't think so now. If a man has to be in the same house with Nora for a month before she can talk to him, there's no hope for her. The trouble is"—Caroline Nelson's voice was sad with reproach—"Nora takes after you. She's exactly like you. Now Dot," with sudden complacency, "is like me."

"But, my dear," Jasper objected, "Dot doesn't look like you. She isn't nearly so good looking."

His wife looked both pleased and chagrined.

"Dot," she said with her usual firmness, "is going to be a beauty."

Dubiously Jasper Nelson regarded his seven-year-old daughter as she played beneath the window with her dog. She was not round and dimpled; she was what Jasper, in his youth, would have called "skinny." She had light brown hair, bobbed, and very straight. Her eyes were too large for her face. She had no nose to speak of and a generous stretch of mouth, from which, right in the front, three teeth were missing. Also—as though, Jasper thought, nature had got in the habit of playing pranks with her and couldn't stop—she was covered with freckles.

"Well," he cautiously admitted, "of course the standard of female beauty changes. Besides, I can't begin to tell what a child is going to look like when she grows up. So if you really think Dot will be all right—"

"She is going to be beautiful," her mother repeated. "Also she is going to know how to manage men. There is nothing shy about that child."

"No," Jasper dryly agreed, "there certainly isn't. I will say that much for her: no sane human being could call her shy."

AT that moment the doorbell rang, and the screen door, which gave upon the veranda and was unlocked, was pushed open.

"May I come in?" a gay voice called.

"It's Milly!" Mrs. Nelson whispered to her husband. "She's always coming over now that Bob's here." Then she called to the newcomer, "We're in the dining room, Milly. Come right on out."

Milly West came into the room, smiled at its occupants, and seated herself in a chair by the window.

"Is Nora home yet?" she asked.

"No," Mrs. Nelson told her. "She hasn't got back from the office. And Bob isn't here either. But I suppose they'll both come in any minute. Won't you stay and have dinner with us, Milly? We're having it a little earlier than usual to-night because Bob is teaching young Mrs. Creighton to drive her car and wants to give her a lesson before dark."

"Why, yes, thanks, I'd love to stay," Milly said, ignoring the reference to Bob's proposed absence.

The screen door opened again, and light footsteps came down the hallway.

"Here's Nora," Mrs. Nelson observed.

And then a slim girl in a figured print frock and a broad-brimmed hat of soft black straw stood framed in the doorway.

Nora's father regarded her proudly, fondly. He noted the cream-white of her skin, the sweetness of her mouth, the intense blue of her eyes, and the way her brown hair curled in feathery tendrils about her forehead. Sweet, fresh, heart-warming, she was—his Nora, his girl! And her mother wanted her to be bold enough to catch a lot of beaux! Queer things, women were . . .

"Hello," Nora said, and then, "Why, hello, Milly. I didn't see you."

"I just dropped in for a few minutes, and Mrs. Nelson asked me to stay for dinner—so here I am, staying."

"Oh," said Nora, after a scarcely perceptible pause, "how nice!" She added, "I'll run up and wash, and come right back. Is dinner almost ready, mother?"

"Almost," Mrs. Nelson reported. "And Bob should be here immediately; so we won't need to wait."

Nora went upstairs to her own room, removed her hat, put it in her closet, and then went into the bathroom to wash her face and hands. She looked very sober. There was a troubled pucker between her dark brows.

Milly here for dinner! Oh, Nora wondered, why did she have to be here to-night? It would be difficult enough to listen to what her mother would have to say when she learned that Rodney was coming. Her mother would be so unflatteringly amazed and delighted. It would be bad enough for Bob to realize that Caroline Nelson was overjoyed at the prospect of her daughter entertaining her first male caller—but then Bob, to Nora's everlasting shame, had heard his Aunt Caroline's regretful references to the fact that her elder daughter would probably be an old maid. Milly was a complete outsider. She didn't know just how eager Nora's mother was to marry her off.

Would it be wiser, Nora debated nervously, to draw her mother away from the others, and tell her that Rodney was coming to-night? Then, at least, Milly and Bob would not hear her first expressions of surprise and delight.

But, if she deliberately drew her mother aside to tell her that Rodney was coming, would she not be making altogether too much of a man's

casual visit to her? Would she not be giving her mother a reason for making an event of the occasion?

"Oh, no, I mustn't do that," Nora decided quickly. "Mother will be bad enough, anyway, without me making her worse. But, oh, I shouldn't have let Rodney come! I *knew* I shouldn't."

But even as she reached this conclusion, Nora's eyes softened, and a smile came to lurk in the corners of her lips. For Rodney had *wanted* to come to see her. He was not satisfied with occasional glimpses of her at the office. He wanted to be with her alone, in her own home. He found her—desirable. Rodney Archer, of all people! Rodney, whom every girl in the office either openly or secretly adored!

"Oh," thought Nora with a queer little catch in her breath, "he's so wonderful! I wonder how he ever happened to look at me."

WHEN she went down to the dining room Nora found her cousin, Bob Nelson, there. He was a big, blond youth, who appeared to be not averse to a mild flirtation with Milly West. But it was quite obvious that he was fond of Nora in a big-brotherly way.

"You're looking blooming to-night, youngster," he remarked, as they seated themselves at the dinner table. "Did somebody just leave you a fortune?"

Nora smiled at him; but before she could reply her young sister made the tempestuous entrance which the family had learned from long experience to expect from her.

"I'm not hungry," she breathlessly announced, climbing into her chair. "I don't want a thing to eat but some marshnallow cake."

"Marshmallow, not marshnallow," her mother corrected with absent-minded patience.

"Yes," Dot placidly agreed, "that's what I said—marshnallow. Anyway, I don't want anything else to eat—"

"You will eat your dinner, or you shall certainly have no cake," Mrs. Nelson asserted. "And now, I want you to be quiet. You talk altogether too much."

Dot subsided into pained and sulky but, the others feared, temporary silence.

For a time conversation flowed pleasantly about the dinner table. Then Mrs. Nelson inquired:

"You're going out to-night, Bob, aren't you?"

Bob reported that he was.

"Well," his aunt decided, "since Milly is here, I'll call her mother up and see if she can't come over after dinner for some bridge. Perhaps I had better call her now, before she has a chance to make other plans—"

"But—but I can't play to-night, mother," Nora interposed.

"Why not? Aren't you feeling well, child?"

"Oh, yes—but—I'm having company."

"Who? Marjorie? Well, perhaps she would like to play bridge."

"No"—Nora was trying hard to speak casually above the quick beat of her heart—"it isn't Marjorie."

"Who is it, then?"

"It's—Rodney Archer."

Mrs. Nelson almost dropped her cup.

"Rodney Archer!" she repeated incredulously. "Who is he?"

"Oh—he's just a man from the office. In fact, he's my boss's son and he has just been made a member of the firm. Anyway, he's coming over to-night; so I can't play bridge."

With eyes that glittered and a tone

lively with excitement, Caroline Nelson turned to her husband.

"Did you hear *that,* Jasper?" she demanded.

"Of course I did, my dear. But you can't expect me to get all stirred up about it. Didn't I just tell you you were foolish to worry because Nora hadn't any beaux? Didn't I say they would start coming around soon enough?"

Nora flushed, dropped her eyes to her plate, and prayed mutely, "Oh, *make* dad keep still! *Please!* He loves me, and he wouldn't hurt me for the world, but, you see, he says the wrong thing—"

"How long have you known this Rodney Archer?" her mother was eagerly inquiring.

"For several months," Nora admitted.

"And he's actually coming out to see you to-night?"

Nora made a brave attempt to look amused, while she avoided both Milly's and Bob's eyes.

"That was the arrangement when I left the office," she managed to say lightly.

"Well," Mrs. Nelson exulted, "this *is* a surprise!" Then, suddenly, blank consternation routed her satisfaction. "The living room curtains!" she exclaimed. "They're ironed, but they're not up. You must put them up right after dinner, Jasper! And, Bob, will you bring down the yellow bowl from your room and the yellow silk pillow? They'll help to dress up the living room."

NORA felt hot and cold by turns. This was awful. Oh, it was too awful! Not for worlds would she have glanced toward Milly West, who must, Nora felt sure, be smiling.

"But, mother," she protested, "you don't need to bother because Rodney Archer is coming. He won't notice—"

"Just leave everything to me," her mother advised. "I know what to do on an occasion like this, and I certainly intend to do it. Now we'll hurry through dinner—"

"Yes, let's!" Dot agreed. "Let's hurry and get to the marshmallow cake."

"Oh," said Mrs. Nelson, "we aren't going to have that cake now! We'll save it and—"

A piercing shriek from Dot interrupted her.

"You *said* if I ate my dinner I could have some marshmallow cake," that indignant young person wailed. "You said I could, and I *did* eat my dinner, and now—"

"You shall have your cake later," her mother promised. "That is, you shall have it if you stop crying. If you are not good, you can't have any at all. I am so glad," she added, beaming about the table, "that we didn't cut the cake. Now we can have it when Mr. Archer comes."

Dot's lips quivered pathetically.

"But I don't want to wait until he comes," she mourned. "What-da-I care about Nora's old beau? I wish she never had got one."

Milly West giggled.

Nora wanted to die.

"*Dot!*" Mrs. Nelson exclaimed—and her tone implied that her offspring had said something sacrilegious. She turned to her elder daughter and continued, "You can have the marshmallow cake when Mr. Archer comes, and I'll make a pitcher of nice lemonade to go with it."

Nora felt stunned.

"Lemonade!" she repeated blankly. Then, "No! Oh, *no,* mother!"

A ripple of uncontrollable laughter broke from Milly.

"Oh, go on, give it to him, Nora," she urged. "This is your chance to serve a man something really different. I'll bet any money he's never tasted lemonade before and that he'd think it was some new kind of kickless punch."

"I don't want to serve Rodney anything, mother," Nora said desperately, ignoring Milly's frivolity. "He'll be here only a short time, and it would be—most unsuitable. It's awfully nice of you to think of it, but—"

"Unsuitable fiddlesticks!" Mrs. Nelson broke in. "Just let me tell you this, young lady: I have entertained, in my day, more men than you've ever thought of. So I know what to do, and you don't."

"But, I'll tell you, Aunt Caroline," Bob interposed, looking tremendously uncomfortable, "Nora is right about this. Times really do change, you know, and—well, if I were you, I wouldn't serve that Archer chap cake and lemonade."

"Oh," said Mrs. Nelson significantly, "perhaps all you young people think I should serve cocktails! That's what you're driving at, I presume. Oh, don't think that because I don't go around with a giddy crowd of fashionable people I don't know all about the goings on among them! And I'm not old-fashioned, either. I want Nora to be as up and coming as any other girl. If she wants cocktails for her beau—why, we'll get them."

"But I don't want them, mother," Nora insisted, fighting back the tears which threatened to add the last touch to her humiliation. "Besides, we haven't anything to make cocktails with, and if we had, none of us know how to make them, except, perhaps Bob—and he's going out. Anyway, I don't want to give Rodney a thing to eat or drink. Please don't let's talk any more about it."

"Well, I must say you're behaving very strangely," Mrs. Nelson observed. "Here I am, trying to do everything to help you, yet nothing that I suggest is right. And I'm just telling you that I made a great concession when I offered to let you serve those cocktails—for personally I don't approve of intoxicating drinks, and I shouldn't have allowed you to touch the stuff, even if you had served it to your beau to prevent him from thinking you didn't know what was what nowadays. But since you're so determined to have everything your own way, go right ahead — only don't blame me if the man never comes back."

Nora looked down at her plate again. This time she was trying to hide the tears that were brimming her eyes.

There was, she knew, only one thing for her to do; she must, somehow, manage to leave the table without disgracing herself.

THEN the gods were kind to her. The telephone bell rang. Nora sprang up.

"I'll answer it," she said in a muffled tone, and hurried from the room.

In the hallway she discovered that an unknown person had called the wrong number—but for once that unknown was blessed. The call had enabled Nora to escape to her own room.

There, she closed the door and locked it, still fighting back her tears.

Whatever happened, she must not cry and make her eyes red—for Rodney was coming!

"Oh, if only I didn't love him so much!" she thought helplessly. "If

only it didn't matter so terribly what he thought about us all!"

But, then, who could help loving Rodney? He was so charming, so handsome, so altogether delightful.

"W-wh-h-at?" she stammered.
"I'm asking you to marry me," he repeated

Nora began to walk nervously up and down the room. If only her mother didn't let Rodney see how delighted she was that at last a man had called upon her daughter! But if her mother would humiliate her as she had at the table before Milly and Bob, what was the use of hoping that she would behave well before Rodney?

The doorbell rang before Nora was quite dressed. Hearing it her fingers trembled as they fastened her ruffled frock of violet georgette, which made her eyes look purple-blue.

Then, from about halfway up the stairs, Dot caroled, "Nora! N-o-r-a—your beau's here!"

Nora leaned weakly against her dressing table.

"Now," she thought wildly, "*now* I can never go downstairs and face Rodney. Oh, I *can't!* He heard what Dot just said. He couldn't have helped it. Oh, I can't go down!"

But, of course, she knew that she must; and so, finally, down she went.

The sight that met her eyes, at the living room door, brought her to an abrupt stop. On the chesterfield her mother was seated beside Rodney Archer, talking animatedly; on a step-ladder by one of the windows her father was perched, hanging up the final ruffled curtain! He was in his shirt sleeves.

Just then Mrs. Nelson caught sight of her daughter.

"Come in, darling," she invited.

"And you don't need to introduce Mr. Archer to me. We are great friends. He came, you see, before your father quite finished hanging the curtains. But I'm sure he understands that men have to do these odd jobs when they come home from work. Though he isn't a family man himself, yet," she added archly, "he will be, one of these days; then company will catch him hanging his own curtains."

AT her first words Rodney had gone to meet Nora. Now he was holding her hand in his; smiling down at her.

Mutely Nora looked at him. He was so slim, yet somehow powerful looking; he was so well groomed, so attractive—so marvelous! And, oh, what must he think? What *must* he think of them? That terrible thing her mother had just said about Rodney one day being a family man and hanging his own curtains! And—and her father, with his coat off, on that *stepladder!* Now he was getting down . . . what a terrible racket he was making with that ladder.

"You don't mind because I got here rather early, do you?" Rodney asked easily. "I must see a man on business a little before ten to-night; so I thought I had better come right over and not waste any time."

"I—I'm so glad you did," Nora assured him. "Won't you sit down?"

She seated herself, then, in one of the big chairs. Rodney returned to his place on the chesterfield. Mrs. Nelson, still serenely planted beside Rodney, beamed from one to the other of the two young people.

"My little girl tells me she has known you for several months, Mr. Archer," she began conversationally.

"Yes," Rodney returned, "I've known her ever since I went into the office, shortly after I left college."

"How nice!" said Mrs. Nelson.

Dot had come into the room. She was standing balanced upon one leg and swinging the other close beside Rodney. And it was Rodney whom she now addressed.

"Which," she inquired, "do you like best, lemonade and marshmallow cake, or cocktails?"

Rodney threw back his head and laughed.

"It all depends," he informed his interlocutor, "upon who made the cake and what's in the cocktails. I don't see how I could compare those things, offhand, and choose between them."

"Well, mother made the cake," Dot offered helpfully. "And I know it's good. I had some—but I almost didn't, because mother wanted to save it until you came and give it to you with some lemonade. But Nora wanted to give you cocktails—or, no, she didn't want to give it to you. Anyway, I guess you're not going to get anything at all."

Nora's cheeks were flaming, but Rodney laughed, so did Mrs. Nelson, though rather nervously.

"Darling child," she protested, "you mustn't say such things! Come on out with mother, now. She wants to talk with you." And then Mrs. Nelson arose.

"But I want to stay here," Dot said with decision.

"Why?" Rodney asked the child teasingly.

"Well—I never saw a beau before. Nora never had one until to-night; so—"

"Come with me," her mother commanded. "Then, later, if you like, you may bring Mr. Archer a piece of that marshmallow cake."

"And can I have another piece, too?"

"Yes—if you come with me, now."

"Good-by," Rodney said, as the small sinner was urged across the room. "Don't forget that cake."

"I won't," Dot promised. "But I haven't got any cocktail."

"That's all right," Rodney said.

He was standing on the hearth rug now, and he was, Nora noted distractedly, grinning. Yes, that was the only word for it.

Well, who could blame him? Undoubtedly he had never been more amused in his life.

Just then he turned to her.

"That sister of yours is a great youngster. How old is she, Nora?"

"She's seven," Nora began—and was interrupted by the entrance of Milly West.

With due formality Rodney was presented to Milly; then the three young people sat down and the conversation became general.

IT was carried on, however, almost exclusively between Rodney and Milly. Nora was very quiet. She would not have spoken at all if it had not, occasionally, been necessary. She was longing to efface herself—*completely* efface herself—so that Rodney need not be reminded of all the humiliating things that had just happened to her. And it was so hard to talk, when all the time she wanted to cry!

Finally she asked Milly to sing.

After that Nora had a legitimate reason for keeping quiet. Milly sang for a long time, one song after another.

She was still singing when Dot came in with a tray on which there had been placed forks and three pieces of marshmallow cake on small plates. Dot passed the tray around.

"No, thanks," said Milly with faint amusement when Dot paused before her.

"All right," the cake-bearer returned, "you had some for dinner, anyway—so go on singing, if you'd rather do that."

But Rodney professed to be highly delighted with the cake, and he lifted Dot up to sit beside him on the chesterfield. Dot was pleased but quiet. She was eating the piece of cake Milly had refused.

A few minutes later Rodney arose.

"I'm fearfully sorry," he said, "but if I'm to catch that man at the hotel, I'll have to go now."

"I must go, too," Milly decided. "I had no idea it was so late."

Then Mrs. Nelson reëntered the room. Rodney said good night to her.

"Oh, but you aren't leaving so soon!" she said reproachfully. "Why, it isn't ten o'clock. And Milly is just going home, aren't you, dear?"

"I'm sorry," Rodney told her, "but I really must get to the hotel in time for a business chat with a man who will be in town only to-night. But I've had a ripping evening—please believe that."

"I'll believe it," Mrs. Nelson said smilingly, "if you come very soon again."

"Indeed I shall."

"But when? Couldn't you have dinner with us on Sunday?"

Rodney glanced questioningly at Nora, received no encouragement from her set face, and said, "I'm afraid I couldn't come Sunday."

"How about Monday, then?"

Again Rodney looked at Nora; again he was forced to conclude that she was not seconding her mother's so cordial invitation.

"I'd like to," he said uncomfortably, "but I couldn't come Monday, either."

"Well, then"—Mrs. Nelson's tone was arch but inflexible—"shall we say Tuesday or Wednesday? Now, you might just as well set a date, because I don't propose to let you go until you do. I have taken a fancy to you, you see. And I am quite old enough to be permitted to say so, isn't that right?"

"Yes, indeed! That is," Rodney floundered, "of course you aren't old at all, but it's no end good of you to—to like me."

"Then which night will you have dinner with us, Tuesday or Wednesday?"

"Why—on Wednesday. I should like awfully to come." Then he was standing before Nora, holding her hand again in his.

"Good night," he said. "I'll see you to-morrow at the office."

"Good night," Nora returned, although her throat was so tight that the words had to be forced through it.

When the door had closed behind Milly and Rodney, Nora pleaded a headache as an excuse for not remaining downstairs and talking with her mother. She went at once to her room, closed the door, flung herself face upon the bed, and burst into tears.

SHE was still crying, muffling her sobs in her pillow, when a soft tap sounded on the door.

Nora held her breath. She couldn't talk with her mother now. Oh, she *couldn't!*

There was another tap on the door, and then:

"It's Bob," a low voice explained. "Won't you let me talk to you a minute, Nora?"

Nora slipped off the bed, crossed the room, and opened the door.

After all, she reasoned, she had been so deeply humiliated that it wouldn't matter if Bob did know she had been crying.

"Oh, you poor youngster!" he said, at sight of her. "I listened at your door and thought I heard you crying. And you haven't even started to undress. Come on down to the living room for a few minutes, won't you? Everybody else has gone to bed, and I want to talk with you."

"All right," said Nora listlessly.

A minute later she was following her cousin down the stairs.

In the living room, seated beside her on the chesterfield, Bob asked without preface, "Was it so very awful?"

"Oh," Nora said brokenly, "*awful!*"

"Tell me about it," he urged.

And Nora did. She told him everything that had happened.

"Gosh!" Bob exclaimed when she had finished. "That's tough luck! Do you—do you like that Archer guy a lot, Nora?"

"Yes," she confessed forlornly, "I—I love him. But that's all over, now—at least, there will never be any chance of his loving me. No man would want a girl who was flung at his head the way mother flung me at Rodney's head to-night. He must think I'm a—a sort of joke." Two large tears brimmed her eyes, and ran dejectedly down her cheeks.

"Don't cry," Bob pleaded. "We'll find some way to smooth things out. Just see if we don't."

"Oh, no," Nora insisted, "they can never be smoothed out. They couldn't *possibly* be. But you're awfully good to me, Bob. You always have been. And you've—done me a lot of good, too."

"How?" Bob wondered. "How have I done you any good?"

"Well, you see, I—I never could talk to men who were anywhere near my own age until you came here to visit us. I suppose you can't understand that; but it's true. I—well, I never had the faintest idea what to say to them. And that made me feel shy and queer."

"I should think it would," Bob said rather gruffly. "But how did I help?"

"Oh, you got me over a great deal of that shyness. You were so nice and natural. Finally I found that it wasn't hard to talk with you, even though you were a man. Then I started to think that—that maybe I could talk naturally with other men, too. So, when Rodney began to stop at my desk to talk with me, I tried awfully hard to be—well, just as I am with you. And it worked. At least, Rodney seemed to like me. He has taken me out for luncheon several times, and then, today, he asked if he couldn't come out to see me. But, oh, I knew I shouldn't let him come! I knew mother would be so elated at the idea of a man coming to see me that she'd let him see it. But what I didn't know was that she'd fling me straight at Rodney's head.

"Still, what could I have done, Bob? Since I love Rodney, I—I couldn't have prevented him from ever coming here. I couldn't even have *tried* to prevent him from coming! He might have thought that I was ashamed of my people. And I'm not. Oh, you *know* I'm not! It's just that I don't want them to advertise the fact that no man has ever before looked at me. I don't want them to make me out such a—a dud."

"Of course you don't," Bob heartily agreed. "And they haven't any right to be so darn tactless. It isn't fair. You're anything but a dud, Nora. You're one of the prettiest girls I've ever seen—and I'll bet Rodney Archer thinks the same thing."

"Oh, no, Rodney doesn't think anything like that about me, now. He—he must despise me. You realize that perfectly. And he must be trying, right now, to think up a good excuse for not coming here for dinner next Wednesday night. Because you know he never would come again, Bob. He'd be afraid mother would ask his intentions, or—or something like that. And—that's what I simply can't endure. It's terrible enough to realize that I've—lost him—but when I think that he is trying to—to keep out of my way, I—I can't *bear* it."

"Well," said Bob slowly, "if you'll do just what I tell you to do, you won't have to bear that."

NORA turned and faced him.

"What do you mean?"

"I've been wondering," he told her, "just how I would feel in Rodney Archer's place, but I haven't been quite able to figure that out. But there is one thing I do know: if you can make him believe you are even more eager to prevent him from coming here than he may be eager to stay away, it would be bound, under the circumstances, to do some good. And it would, at least, save your pride."

"But—how could I make Rodney think anything like that?"

"Well, you could go into his office to-morrow morning and, with every appearance of straightforwardness, tell him that you think it would be much wiser if he didn't come to dinner on Wednesday. And then—now listen carefully, for this is the good part—you could explain that because you are determined never to marry, your parents have become almost frantically anxious that you should. Say that your

mother, in particular, has become so worried about your desire to remain single that she tries almost to force you upon any nice man in sight.

"Then explain that, this being the case, it isn't fair for you to have men at the house and so raise your mother's hopes of inducing you one day to marry. Say that she is too greatly disappointed afterward, when she learns that you are still resolved to remain single. And, when Rodney Archer asks you why you are so determined to remain single, say that you have simply no desire at all to marry, but that you do want to become a successful business woman. That should make him at least sit up and think. But do you suppose you could really do it, youngster?"

Nora's blue eyes were fixed intently upon him now. Her lips were parted and her breath was coming unevenly.

"I could—*try*," she half whispered. "And, oh, you're right, Bob, it would save my pride! Rodney would never know—he could never even guess how much I—want to marry him."

"You bet he couldn't—not if you play your part well enough. That's all up to you, Nora. So, if you think you can do it—and *I* think you can—go ahead."

"I will," said Nora resolutely. "I *will* do it."

"Fine!" Bob approved. "And now go to bed at once and get all the sleep you can."

Promptly and gratefully Nora obeyed him.

Not once, that night or the next morning, did Nora's determination to take Bob's advice falter. And yet, when she stood outside Rodney's office, at eleven o'clock the following morning, her knees were trembling and her hands were ice-cold.

"But I won't be frightened," she told herself vehemently. "I will go through with it—and I'm going to do it *well*."

Then she raised one of her small, cold hands and knocked upon Rodney's door.

She was promptly—altogether *too* promptly—invited to enter.

Rodney glanced up as she came into the room, arose, smiled a trifle uncertainly, and said "Good morning. I was just thinking about you."

Convinced that it was fortunate for her that she could not know just what it was he had been thinking, Nora asked if she might speak with him a moment.

Rodney drew a chair forward, waited until she had seated herself, and then went back to his place behind the desk.

And so the stage was set. Everything was ready. All Nora needed to do was to begin.

IT was not, however, easy for her to begin.

"I want to talk with you very frankly," she said at last, trying to ignore the rapid beating of her heart. "And I hope you won't think I'm fearfully discourteous, or—anything like that."

"Of course I shan't," he earnestly assured her. "What is it, Nora?"

"It's—that, if you don't mind too much, I—I would rather you didn't come to dinner with us next Wednesday night."

Rodney looked at her for a moment from beneath drawn brows. Then:

"Do you mind telling me why?" he asked quietly, adding, "Don't, of course, if you would rather not."

"Oh, but I want to tell you. I want to explain. You see, mother is fear-

fully disturbed about me because I—I never intend to marry. I don't want to. I'd much rather be a successful business woman.

"But mother simply can't reconcile herself to the idea of my remaining single, and so she grows instantly hopeful every time I even look at a man. What is more, she tries frantically to make every man I know interested in me and to throw us together. That doesn't matter so much, because naturally I know that I don't need to marry unless I wish to, even if it would please mother—but, just the same, I can't bear to see her grow hopeful over a man, and then, when she learns that I am still resolved never to marry, be so fearfully disappointed. And she always is so disappointed.

"Now—this will amuse you a lot—she thinks that possibly I might fall in love with you. And, since she is my mother, she thinks it would be the easiest thing in the world for you to love me.

"But, as I said before, none of that is very important to us. It doesn't really matter. What does matter is the fact that if I have you at our house again mother will grow more and more hopeful. Then, when I convince her that—well, that you don't want to marry me and that nothing would induce me to marry you, she'll just break her heart over it as usual. And I think I should avoid that, if I can—don't you?"

Rodney did not answer at once. He looked a little stunned.

"So—nothing would induce you to marry me?" he said at last.

Nora, who had been leaning back in her chair, weakly conscious of having performed rather well a difficult task, now sat erect and stared at the man opposite her. What did he mean by that question? How could she answer it?

"Why did you—ask me that?" she asked uncertainly.

Rodney tried to smile. It was not much of a success as smiles go.

"Because," he said, meeting squarely her puzzled blue eyes, "I love you, Nora."

The hands in Nora's lap closed convulsively. Otherwise she remained perfectly still. And yet it seemed that the whole world was reeling around her.

Rodney loved her! He loved her even after the humiliating way her mother had behaved last night. She had been made to appear ridiculous before him; she had been thrown at his head—and yet he loved her!

And now what was she to say? Bob hadn't expected this. He hadn't told her what to say, if anything of this sort should happen.

But *had* Bob expected it? Had he thought that what she had just told Rodney might, perhaps, open his eyes to the fact that he loved her?

WELL, that line of thought didn't help her much. The fact remained that she had just told Rodney how positively she never wanted to marry any one—only to be told promptly by him that he loved her!

"Are you—are you *sure?*" she said weakly.

"Sure that I love you?" Rodney asked, trying again to smile. "Rather! I'm very, very sure that I do. I've suspected it for some time, but now I know. As a matter of fact, I knew last night, when Mrs Nelson asked me to dinner, and you—made it very plain that you didn't want me. And I've thought several times, these last weeks, that possibly you might one day come to—care for me a little. Since you feel,

however, that nothing could induce you to marry me, I—I can see that I was wrong."

"But—but do you *want* me to marry you?" Nora faltered.

"*Do* I!" Rodney echoed. "I want it more than anything on earth."

"Well—then," said Nora in a small voice, "if you want me to—I will."

Rodney stared at her, bewildered.

"But you said that nothing could induce you to—"

"Oh, I *know* I said that! Don't tell me about it again," Nora implored. "Anyway I—I didn't mean it."

"Then why—"

"I said it because—because this time I was a little afraid that I might be hurt as well as mother. You see, I was a little afraid that I might fall in love with—with you—and—and I *never* thought you would love me. So I—I didnt want to see you any more—because I've never felt like this before about any man. Maybe—maybe I'm in love with you. In fact, I think I am. Perhaps, if you should—kiss me, I—I'd find out—"

In two bounds Rodney was beside her and had gathered her up in his arms. He kissed her. He kissed, to be exact, every square inch of her face.

"Now do you know?" he whispered. "Darling, *now* do you know?"

"Well," said the so-shy Nora, "perhaps you had better kiss me again—"

For a long time their lips clung together. Then:

"Oh, I love you!" Nora whispered. "Isn't it wonderful?"

"Wonderful is a mild word," Rodney exulted. "It's—it's glorious!"

Again he pressed tender, ardent lips to hers.

A few minutes later Nora remembered something.

"I want to use your telephone," she announced happily. "I want to call up Bob—he's my cousin, you know—and tell him that we're engaged. You don't mind, do you?"

"Rather not!" said Rodney boyishly. "Go ahead and tell the world."

So Nora called her home. And, perhaps because things were going entirely her way that morning, it was Bob himself who answered the telephone.

"Oh, hello, Bob!" she exclaimed. "This is Nora. I want to tell you something: I—I'm going to marry Rodney."

A low chuckle floated to her from across the wire. "I thought perhaps you would," Bob said.

"Oh," Nora returned meaningly, "did you really?"

"I did. May I tell your mother?"

"Oh, yes—you may tell the world!"

Nora replaced the receiver and held out her arms to Rodney.

He clasped her very close, his eager lips seeking hers.

"I love you," he said huskily. "Oh, sweetheart, I love you! You'll marry me soon, won't you?"

"Yes," Nora promised. "And won't it be strange? You won't be my boss any more; you'll be my husband."

Rodney's eyes danced.

"I like that! Won't I be your boss when I'm your husband?"

Nora pressed her cheek to his in sudden, youthful abandon.

"No," she told him, "you will be, always and always, my—beloved."

"To be your beloved and your husband!" Rodney murmured. "Oh, sweetheart, I can't believe it. I can only adore you and—"

"And—kiss me?" Nora prompted.

Whereupon Rodney proved that he could, most certainly, both adore and kiss her!

"If it freezes," he told her grimly, "we won't be able to get back!"

Her Bartered Beauty

Tragedy stalks in the wake of an innocent pleasure trip, and Cinderella awakes once more to sordid reality

By Beulah Poynter

Author of "Cinderella on Broadway," etc.

RESCUED from her sordid existence in a box car with her drunken grandfather, Asa, Mittie Blaine is taken by Agatha Druce, smart-divorcée, to the big hotel on Roan Top Mountain, to impersonate Lady Marjorie Page, a friend Mrs. Druce had met abroad.

While Mittie is willing to masquerade to be near her idol, Ronald, Mrs. Druce's younger brother, and because she thinks it merely a whim of her rich protector, in reality Agatha plans to avenge herself upon Hal Armitage, the man she loves, but who does not wish to marry her, by scheming to make him

Google

fall in love with the beauty of the supposed Lady Marjorie—only to be told who and what she really is!

Mittie and Ronald Standish go motoring early one morning before any one else is up. Only the day before Mrs. Druce had warned her *protégée* that she must keep away from Ronald, but the girl succumbs to temptation.

CHAPTER VII

A DRIVE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

UNLUCKILY Mrs. Druce did not sleep late the next morning. Ten minutes after Mittie and Ronald Standish were seated in the yellow sport car and headed toward the lofty summit of Blood Mountain, Agatha awakened from a fitful slumber and rang for a waiter. She drank several cups of strong coffee, which helped to banish a splitting headache and quiet her tearing nerves. Then she dressed slowly, lingering over the process, almost too weary for the effort it entailed.

At eight o'clock she went to Mittie's door and knocked. There was no response. She knocked again. When repeated rapping did not open the door, she concluded that the girl had risen early and gone downstairs, though Mittie had never done so before. Ronald was always an early riser, but Agatha felt sure that her *protégée* would not go against her admonition, and it did not occur to her that Mittie could be with her brother until she came face to face with Hal Armitage on the veranda.

There was a rather cynical smile on Hal's face as he greeted her.

"Evidently I'm too late to get into the running," he said. "I just saw that cub of a brother of yours making off with her ladyship."

"What?" gasped Agatha.

"Yes — in his roadster, headed north."

Agatha's eyes shot fire before she could command their expression.

"Ronnie has no right to do that," she explained hastily. "He's engaged to Cecily Howard."

"Yes? Well, Lady Marjorie is very attractive. Even a betrothal couldn't blind a man to the fact."

"You find her attractive?" Agatha asked. Her pulses raced with anger, but she was determined that Armitage should not see it.

"Very. Don't you think she is?"

"Yes." Mrs. Druce looked at him steadily, and a sneer curled her lips. "She's a woman of position, my dear Hal. Her father is Earl Page, head of a great English family."

He smiled.

"Meaning—"

"Ronnie's a lap ahead of you, but he's also handicapped. I wish you luck in your race!"

"I'd like to believe you meant that."

"I do! Oh, I do!" she said so fervently that Armitage was puzzled.

RONALD tucked the robe tighter about Mittie's knees.

"You aren't cold?" he asked, for a chilly wind was sweeping across the valley.

"No."

"I suppose this is all new to you?"

"Oh, yes!"

This was true, for she had never been beyond Roan Top.

"It's a beautiful drive. When these mountains are covered with snow, it's not unlike Switzerland. You've been there, of course?"

Mittie hesitated to lie.

"When I was a child," she said. "I don't remember it."

"Rather a dangerous ride, though," he added, "when the roads are icy. Sometimes there are snow slides. I wouldn't care to risk it then."

He glanced upward at a heavy bank of clouds scurrying onward to greet others still darker and more threatening. There was a moisture in the cold air that did not please him, and the wind seemed to be rising. Just his luck, he thought, if a storm should blow up. It was too early for a blizzard. Blizzards seldom came before Christmas; but a rain storm and an open car might not be a pleasant combination.

"I've never seen a snow slide," Mittie said truthfully.

"Neither have I, and I shouldn't care to. Wonder if it's going to rain!"

"Oh, dear, I hope not!"

"So do I," he said earnestly. "I may not get you away from Agatha again soon, and I want to make the most of this opportunity; but I shouldn't like you to get wet."

He glanced from her flushed face to the sky again.

"I wouldn't mind getting wet," declared Mittie.

"Then we'll go on."

The road was a steady incline, much steeper than one would imagine until one turned a sharp curve and looked back. Great bowlders jutted out over chasms screened with a thick growth of trees, now all riotous with autumn colors—gold, orange, crimson, brown, green. A mountain stream cut through the gorge and fell in a cascade of seething foam, hundreds of feet below.

Mittie had an instinctive love of beauty, and she deeply appreciated the grandeur of the scenery. She could not express her feeling in words, but her face and her eyes told her companion what she left unsaid.

Still the road wound steadily upward, the engine panting as it conquered the heavy grade. Ronald was a good driver. He did not believe in conversation when at the wheel. After all, why should they talk? The voice of nature was more powerful than any words that could pass their lips. Just being together was joy enough.

At the summit of the mountain was a tea room—a shabby log structure, not very inviting; but they stopped there, and Ronald insisted that Mittie should have something warm to drink. It had grown much colder. The wind was tearing through the trees with a queer whistling moan; the fallen leaves scurried along in swirls of dust, and lost themselves in the dark shadows of the forest.

They entered the little room, warmed by a blaze in an open fireplace, and redolent of coffee, chicory, and fried food. They sat down at a table covered with checkered gingham, and ordered coffee. It was neither strong nor particularly good, but they drank it.

"Turnin' cold, ain't it?" said the woman who served them—a rawboned, tired-looking creature in a gown that matched the table cover. "I reckon winter's pretty nigh here. Winter comes earlier every year, seems tuh me."

"Yes?" Ronald answered. "Do you have much snow up here?"

"Purty tolerable amount, 'long in December. You strangers hereabouts?"

"Yes, we're strangers."

The woman glanced out of the window.

"Them clouds look kind o' bad tuh me. Goin' fur?"

"To five miles this side of Roan City—to the Summit House."

"Resorter, huh? Lots of folks from the Summit House come up here durin' the summer; but we don't hev much trade in the winter. Reckon yuh better hadn't waste no time gittin' thar. Ef hit rains, and the road gits slick, you might hev an accident. The road gits slick powerful easy, folks tell me whut rides on hit. I ain't never rid on hit myself, but thet's whut they say. Thar's lots of accidents on this mountain. Them clouds look kind o' bad!"

"Snow?" Ronald asked anxiously.

"Looks kind o' like hit. Hit's early fur snow, but seasons is changing. We're in fur a spell of bad weather, anyway."

"I believe we had better hurry," Ronald said to Mittie, rising. "If it should storm, I'd never forgive myself for keeping you out in it. I know you aren't dressed warmly enough."

"I'm not cold," Mittie protested. "Really I'm not."

But she shivered as she stepped out of the tea room. A few drops of rain spattered against her face—rain that bade fair to turn into snow.

"It was stupid of me to come away without a heavy coat," Ronald said, starting the engine; "but it wasn't cold at Roan Top, and the sun was out. Thank fortune we have the robe, anyway!"

Slowly, carefully, he began the descent. The rain was coming down in larger drops now. The road, as it wound around the mountain, glistened as if covered with oil. The trees bent and groaned under the force of the driving wind.

Ronald's lips were set grimly.

"I should never have brought you," he said.

"Don't think of me," replied Mittie. "I'm not afraid of storms."

As if night had suddenly fallen, a thick veil of darkness descended upon them. Ronald switched on his headlights. Both he and Mittie were drenched now, their coats clinging to their bodies, their teeth chattering, their lips and noses blue.

It was impossible to see more than a few feet ahead. The light could not cut through the wet screen before them.

"We should have stayed in that tea shop," he said. "You're freezing!"

"So are you," she answered; "but maybe it won't rain long."

"It's turning into sleet, and that's worse. I'm afraid we'll have to stop until the storm subsides." His eyes searched the roadside. "I noticed a tourist camp somewhere around here on our way up. If we could find it—"

"There!" She touched his arm. "Isn't that it—those white things that look like houses?"

They were on a small plateau. To one side little gray shadows, lighter than the trees, could be seen through the driving downpour. Ronald pulled to the roadside under a clump of trees, turning his headlights upon the faintly visible objects. Several small structures, like barracks, sprang into view.

"Yes, this is luck! I hope we can find a door unlocked, and get in."

He swung the car around and drove through the avenue of pines. There were no lights in any of the buildings, no indication of life anywhere about. It was too late in the season for tourists to camp in the forest.

"Stay here," Ronald said, "while I see if I can open a door or window."

THE downpour enveloped Ronald's figure as he walked away; but a little later Mittie heard him call:

"It's all right. Come on!"

A light guided her toward him. He had raised an unlatched window, climbed in, and then unlocked a door. There was a lamp filled with kerosene on a table. He had lighted it.

"It could be worse," he chuckled, taking her icy hands in his to warm them. "Not much to look at, but a shelter, and maybe I can build a fire."

The shack consisted of two rooms. One, in which they stood, contained two beds, a dresser, a table, and several chairs. The other room was a kitchen with a cookstove, cooking utensils, and dishes. In one corner were a cupboard and a table with a cloth on it. Some one had left behind a filled can of coffee, several newspapers, and a box full of chips. Everything in the place was plain, but clean.

Ronald took one of the kitchen chairs, smashed the rungs from it with his heel, put them in the stove, together with the newspapers and chips, and started a fire. The remainder of the chair followed.

"Don't stand there in your wet clothes," he said. "You're drenched. Take them off, and wrap yourself in a blanket, while I make some coffee. I wish it was whisky; but thanks be, it's something!"

"You're soaked, too," she said. "You'll catch cold."

"I'll change after you."

She closed the door between the rooms, and hastily disrobed. She was shaking so heavily with the chill that her fingers were clumsy. She dragged a blanket from one of the beds and wrapped it around her. She knew so little of social conventions that she felt no hesitancy in returning to the kitchen.

"Give me your clothes. I'll put them on a chair by the stove," Ronald said.

He did not look at her. He drew a chair to the fire, and she huddled in it, like a small Indian squaw, her blanket tight about her, her face red from the glow of the fire.

"There's coffee," he told her, "but no water to boil it in. I'll have to hold a pan outside to get some. I'll close this door, so that you won't feel a draft. I hope you aren't ill from this!"

"I hope you aren't," she answered.

For an hour the sleety rain fell—great sheets of icy water that beat against the doors and windows and trickled in small puddles through the roof. Their clothing had dried, and the blankets had been replaced. The fire was dying down, and all the coffee had been drunk.

They sat in silence, listening to the wind that howled through the dense timber, the groan of branch against branch, and now and then a crash, as a tree, uprooted by the force of the storm, fell to the ground.

Ronald looked at his watch.

"It's twelve o'clock — nearly lunch time," he said. "Agatha will wonder where we are."

Mittie was thinking of that. Would Mrs. Druce make good her threat when she learned that she had been disobeyed? Would she send her *protégée* away?

One o'clock, and still it fell—sometimes a gust of snow, sometimes rain, sometimes sleet. The wind still howled. Ronald broke up another chair and rekindled the fire.

"I'm going outside to get some wood," he said. "It will be wet, of course, but it may burn with this dry stuff."

Hour after hour they sat there, silent for the most part, acutely conscious of each other, strangely, unaccountably embarrassed. Ronald made

more coffee, and tried to talk, hoping to take the girl's mind off their predicament. Quite naturally, he feared the conventions more than she did. It would be devilish if the storm continued all night—devilish for her. People at the hotel would make a scandal of it. Cecily would be furious, and so would Agatha. God, she was lovely with the fire glow on her hair, her cheeks and lips crimson!

Six o'clock, and the storm was a blizzard now. Great flakes of snow beat against the window, and the ground outside was mantled with white. The wind shook the cottage, rattled the doors and windows, and whistled down the chimney. The light flickered in the drafts.

"Can't we go—now?" Mittie stammered with tremulous lips. "It's not raining."

She felt as if she couldn't sit here any longer, so close to him, with a wall of restraint between them. It smothered her.

"We'd never dare risk it in a blizzard. This is more dangerous than the rain."

"But Mrs. Druce—"

Her voice faltered. Agatha knew that they were missing. It was all over. The clock had struck twelve for her. She would have to go back to the box car, leaving all her beautiful dreams behind. Her agonized eyes met Ronald's.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" he cried. "I got you into this—and it looks as if we might be here all night!"

Those cats at the hotel—of course she was worried! What pleasure it would give those envious harpies to tear her reputation to shreds! And he couldn't offer to protect her. He hadn't the right. If only Cecily didn't exist—

"If the road wasn't so dangerous, I'd chance the blizzard," he said aloud; "but it would be taking our lives in our hands if we started out now. I'm afraid we'd never get there. I'm so sorry! I'd give anything if this hadn't happened!" Impulsively he placed one of his hands on hers. "We'll have to make the best of it, won't we?"

This was her hour—the last she might ever have. She smiled. Her fingers curled about his.

"You're a good sport," he said huskily. "I knew you would be!"

Her fingers tightened, then relaxed again.

He must keep a grip on himself, Ronald felt; but, God, she was sweet! She was worried, but she tried not to show it. She trusted him, too. He wondered what she'd say if she knew how he felt toward her. He was a cad to feel that way, when there was Cecily. Probably Cecily would never forgive him. He must think of something to say. Books — music — theaters—what was she interested in?

"Your hair is glorious!"

Why had he said that? How asinine to pay compliments now! But her hair *was* glorious, like gold wires alive with light. Her mouth—he mustn't think of her mouth. He wanted to kiss it, but he mustn't.

The pulse in the tips of her fingers sent his blood racing. Her eyes, dark in the lamp glow, held an unfathomable depth. Her smile—

What was she thinking about? She swayed forward a trifle, drawn by the surge of desire in the young man. A little laugh — tremulous, husky — escaped her parted lips.

"God, but you're sweet!" he whispered, as his arms closed about her. "I love you!"

"I love you," she answered. "Oh, I love you so much!"

His lips found hers and held them. Outside the storm raged.

CHAPTER VIII

"I LOVE YOU"

PRESENTLY Ronald's arms released the girl, and he passed a shaking hand across his forehead. It was damp, and he was trembling. Mittie's face seemed blurred, as if covered with a veil. He blinked his eyes very hard.

"I—I shouldn't have done that," he muttered. "You'll think I'm a cad!"

"No."

"I love you!" He did not offer to touch her again. "You have to believe that, even though—you know about Cecily?"

"Yes—you're going to marry her."

"I'm engaged to her; but how can I marry her now? Even if I didn't love you, and I do—with every drop of blood in me I love you—even if I didn't, I owe it to your reputation to marry you, if we are compelled to stay here."

"You don't owe me anything," Mittie said.

His hands clenched and unclenched at his sides.

"If only Cecily would release me! But she won't. Not even this will make her release me. She'll understand. Others will make all sorts of wild conjectures, but Cecily will know that there was an accident—that something tied us up here. And she thinks that I love her!"

"Do you?"

"I'm fond of her. I thought I loved her until I saw you. I loved you the first time you spoke to me on the balcony!"

Mittie wanted to tell him that she had loved him long before that, but she didn't say it. Suddenly he laughed.

"I'm foolish to be talking about marriage to you. Perhaps you wouldn't have me. Perhaps you are engaged yourself."

"I'm not," Mittie said. "Why talk?" she longed to add. "Take me in your arms again! Hold me! There'll never be another hour like this. Hold me tight, and tell me that you love me! Don't talk of Cecily. This is our hour—our only one."

"And you do love me? You meant it when you said you did?"

Ronald caught her hands again. He held them against his chest and stood looking down at her.

"And you really love me?" he inquired. "You meant it when you said you did?"

She could feel his heart beating.

"Yes, I meant it. I never loved any one before, or even thought that I did."

"You couldn't have kissed me as you did," he murmured, trying to convince himself that this wonder was true, "unless you loved me. God, to love like this and be separated!"

Mittie closed her eyes. This moment—this moment that was hers, and would so soon be gone!

"If—if Cecily will release me, will you marry me?" he asked huskily.

"I—I don't know."

A squatter girl marry Ronald Standish! Asa Blaine's granddaughter—Asa Blaine, convict, drunkard! Lalock's threat, Agatha's threat! No, she and Ronald were millions of miles apart.

"You think that I'm changeable; that I don't know what I want?" he suggested.

Mittie shook her head.

"I know I want you," he told her.

"As long as I live I'll never love another woman. I love you—oh, Marjorie, I love you!"

She was in his arms again. She was in heaven—her only heaven.

"Tell him who you are," counseled a voice within her. "He loves you—not what he thinks you are, but *you*. He'll pardon the deception. He'll forgive you for being Asa Blaine's granddaughter. Tell him!"

"You're so little and sweet—just an armful," Ronald was saying. "I love your hair, and your eyes, and your mouth. You're so beautiful, Marjorie, so beautiful!"

"Tell him," the inner voice urged.

She moved, drew herself reluctantly from his embrace, and sank into one of the chairs by the stove. He dropped on his knees beside her and wound his

He dropped on his knees beside her, and willingly she gave herself to his arms

arms around her. Her hand wandered timidly over the dark waves of his hair.

"Tell him now," the voice insisted.

"When Hal Armitage showed up I was afraid I wouldn't have a look in. He has a great way with women. Sis has always been keen about him, and he's free—"

"If—if I weren't—if I weren't Lady Marjorie—would you still love me?" Mittie stammered.

"Do you think I give a hang about titles? I'm not a snob!"

"Agatha says a title is a great attraction."

"Perhaps it is for some men, but not for me. If you were plain Mary Smith, I'd love you just the same. All I want in a woman is honesty, character, sweetness. I'm glad your family is a good one, for I should want my children, if I had any, to have a good heritage; but anything else—"

She shivered.

"You're cold!"

"A little."

"You poor child! No lunch, no dinner—and cold! I'm going to drag one of those beds in here, and you're going to try to sleep."

"Oh, no!"

"Oh, yes! There's no reason why you should be any more uncomfortable than is necessary. I'll bunk in the other room, and the first thing we know it will be morning."

He rose and went into the other room. She sat motionless, staring at the cookstove, which was red with the glow of the fire inside. She hadn't told him, but Agatha would. How could she sleep, when sleep would part them, when to-morrow she would have to go back to the box car and to Lalock? Tears filled her eyes and rolled unheeded down her cheeks.

He brought one of the beds into the kitchen, turned down the covers, and threw a blanket over it.

"You'll be warmer if you keep your clothes on," he said. "If you want anything, just knock on the door. I'll leave the lamp with you."

"Thank you."

"Why, Marjorie, crying?"

"No."

"You are! Why, darling? I'll tell Cecily that I love you. It may hurt her, but it's the only thing to do." He took Mittie in his arms again and kissed her wet eyelids. "Everything is sure to come out all right. I know how you feel, dear. We can't avoid a little scandal; but what do we care for Roan City, or the Summit House? What do we care for any one in the world but ourselves? Marjorie, sweet, we'll be married next week—to-morrow—"

She pushed him from her.

"We won't ever be married," she sobbed. "Never!"

"You'll see. I can't have you crying. Stop it! Stop it, I say!" He kissed her until she laughed tremulously. "Atta girl! Good night, dear!"

"Good night," she whispered:

AGATHA spent the early part of the morning on the veranda, watching the road that wound down the mountainside and then writhed and twisted like a silver snake on the huge flank of the loftier mountain beyond.

Each moment her anger against Mittie increased. How dared the girl disobey her? What a fool Ronald was to risk Cecily's displeasure so soon after winning her consent to marry him! Agatha would have to tell him the truth about the girl, or send Mittie away. In spite of her anger and anx-

iety, she was reluctant to take the latter course. She still wanted her revenge upon Armitage.

When the first drops of rain fell and the wind began to rise, she went inside the hotel, confident that the two young people would soon return. Armitage asked her to join a bridge game, but she refused, and went to her room. She was too angry and too much upset to trust herself with him. Let him think what he would!

At twelve o'clock her telephone rang. Cecily was downstairs.

"I've invited myself to lunch," said a blithe voice. "I want to meet your visitor."

"Lady Marjorie?"

"Yes. Ron says she's a peach."

"I'll be right down."

Cecily, in a sport coat of lapin and a buff-colored hat to match, greeted her in the lobby.

"I trotted out the old fur," she said. "It's blowing up as cold as the dickens. Dad thinks we're in for a blizzard. Where's her ladyship?"

"Why, she and Ronnie went out for a drive this morning, and they aren't back yet."

Cecily's blue eyes became icy.

"Yes? Not a nice day for a drive, is it? Did they go to town?"

"No. Hal—you know Hal Armitage—says they were headed for Blood Mountain when he saw them."

"So!" Cecily's thin lips tightened. "When it storms, it storms for fair up there."

"Oh, they'll be back any minute," Agatha assured her. "They weren't going far. Shall we wait here for them?"

Cecily sat down in one of the wicker chairs and extracted a cigarette from her purse. Her hand shook a little as she lighted it.

"Lady Marjorie pretty?" she asked.

"Rather," Agatha reluctantly admitted.

"Don't spare my feelings. Ron says she's a beauty."

"Beauty is a matter of taste. You've no cause to be jealous."

Cecily laughed.

"I'm not jealous," she said; "but you know, Ag, Ron doesn't really love me."

"Yes, he does."

"Oh, no, he doesn't! He likes me a lot, and I think he really wants to marry me; but if some other girl—"

She threw a cloud of smoke about her flaxen head.

"You've nothing to fear from Lady Marjorie," insisted Agatha.

"I've everything to fear from any attractive girl. However, possession is nine points of the law, they say. Ronnie is mine, and I'll fight to keep him!"

"I hope you do," Agatha said fervently.

Cecily looked at her in surprise.

"You prefer me to a titled woman as a sister-in-law?"

"You know that I've long wanted you and Ronnie to marry."

"No longer than I have, old dear. Risky business to marry a man who doesn't love you, but I'm a good gambler, and Ronnie is honorable."

By one o'clock the air was filled with snowflakes. Agatha, genuinely worried, and wishing that Cecily was anywhere but where she was, suggested that they should wait for the truants no longer, but go in to luncheon.

Armitage joined them.

"Beastly day, isn't it?" he said, after shaking Cecily's hand. "Have Lady Marjorie and your brother returned yet?"

"No. I hope nothing has happened.

Ronnie has an open car. I can't understand his staying out in such weather!" Agatha made no attempt to hide her genuine anxiety for her brother's safety.

"They've probably taken shelter somewhere," Armitage suggested casually.

It was a silent meal. After it was over, Cecily decided to return home before the storm really broke.

"I might get held up in it myself," she said. "Have Ronnie phone me when he comes in."

The long afternoon Agatha spent between her room and the office. By nightfall every one in the hotel knew that her brother and Lady Marjorie had gone away together in a car that morning, and had not returned. Several conjectures were made. There were whispers of an elopement, of an accident. One rumor was that they had been caught in the storm and killed on the mountain.

Agatha was half hysterical. By midnight she tried to induce Armitage to take a car and go in search of them; but he refused.

"I don't know the roads around here. No one could stay out in the blizzard long, or find his way. Probably they're safe under shelter somewhere, and they'll show up when the storm is over."

Her request to other men met the same response. Morning found her haggard from lack of sleep. By seven o'clock, when the wind had died down and the snow had ceased to fall, by offering to pay him well, she persuaded one of the men in a Roan City garage to go up Blood Mountain with a service car. She insisted upon going with him.

As she got into the machine, bundled from head to foot in furs, a man in a black limousine drove up to the front entrance of the hotel. He left his machine, and walked briskly across the lobby to the clerk at the desk. There he demanded to see Mrs. Druce. He was informed that she had just gone out in a service car, but probably had not yet passed the gate of the hotel grounds.

Hurrying back to the doorway, he saw the service car plugging through the snow, saw it turn into the main road and head north. He leaped into his own machine and followed.

Lalock had succeeded in finding out where Mittie was. Old Asa Blaine had not kept her secret.

MITTIE awakened suddenly. The fire had died down, and the room was very cold. She lay quiet, listening. The wind was now only a faint moan through the trees, and the snow no longer beat against the windows — windows etched into fairy patterns by the artist fingers of Jack Frost.

A pale blue light appeared on the horizon and slowly crept into the room. Morning was almost here.

Morning! Ronald would take her back to the hotel, and Agatha would tell him the truth—that she was a cheat, deceiving him, deceiving every one. His love would not stand the test. He would turn back to Cecily, and Mittie would be sent back to the box car in shame and disgrace.

She couldn't endure that now, after she had lain in his arms and heard him whisper that he loved her, after she had told him that she loved him.

She slipped noiselessly out of the bed and stood for a moment beside the stove, which was still a little warm. Why did she go on living? It was all so hopeless — so much more hopeless

than before she had known Ronald. Nothing she could ever do would change it. Nothing could ever give her the one thing she wanted in life. It would be better to pass out now, while his kisses still tingled on her lips. It would be better to leave him with the memory of those wonderful moments than to have him turn from her in disgust. Agatha would spare her, if she were dead, and Ronald would never know what she really was.

She slipped on her coat, hat, and gloves, and cautiously opened the kitchen door. There was snow banked around it. A cold blast of wind made her shiver with dismay; but she stepped outside and closed the door behind her.

How beautiful it was—the fir trees shimmering with ice, the bushes like gleaming silver, the ground a blanket of white velvet!

She saw Ronald's car by the roadside, where they had left it. It also was white, with a canopy of white branches over it.

A sob in her throat choked her. Was it yesterday that he had brought her here, or was it a year ago? If only she didn't love him so much!

She began to run, instinctively following the road. The exercise warmed her blood and brought bright color to her cheeks. Several times she stumbled over stones and vines hidden by the snow, and rose dizzy and trembling. The sun, peeping over the pines, threw its glare on the dazzling expanse and blinded her. Spots of scarlet appeared before her eyes — scarlet, orange, and gold. Stabbing pains shot through her temples. Her limbs felt heavy, as if huge weights were attached to her feet.

Why was she running? Oh, yes, from Ronald! No, from Agatha! But she didn't need to run now. She had come out here to die, and it wasn't easy to die. The cold bit into your bones, nipped your ears and fingers, made them burn and pain, but it didn't kill you. She was full of life yet, and her heart was racing. Only she was tired—so tired!

What would Lalock do to her grandfather if she was dead? She hadn't thought of that. It was wicked to think only of yourself.

Lalock wanted to marry her—and why not? A living death—but what did it matter? It would save old Asa from the peril that menaced him.

She was so tired, so sleepy! She had never been so sleepy before. Where did the road lead? She struggled on, stumbling, tripping, panting, and finally falling on her hands and knees. She couldn't get up. She was too tired, too sleepy. It was nice to lie still and rest.

"Oh, Ronald, Ronald, I love you so!" was her last conscious thought.

CHAPTER IX

LALOCK FINDS MITTIE

ALREADY snow plows had been busy along the road, and a slender black ribbon cut between huge mounds of white. The service car, an ancient Dodge sedan, moved along at a brisk gait. Huddled beside the driver, a youth in a greasy cowskin coat, Agatha Druce kept her eyes alert on either side.

Somewhere Ronald's car might be in a ditch. At any moment she might see it turned turtle, and his lifeless body pinned under it. What had happened to the girl mattered not at all.

The driver regaled her with stories of accidents that had occurred the year before, during a blizzard, until she wanted to scream:

"Shut up! Can't you see I'm almost crazy?"

Behind them followed Lalock, determined to overtake Mrs. Druce. Asa had told him that Mittie was with her, and Mittie should not escape.

At a turn in the road, just as the Dodge started up Blood Mountain, Lalock jerked up behind them and gave a sharp blast of his horn.

"That guy wants to pass us, but he can't," chuckled the driver; "and if he thinks I'll speed up on this hill, he's crazy."

He put his engine in low, and started up the incline. Lalock honked his horn again, and came up directly behind them. When Agatha looked back, he waved to her.

"Stop!" he called. "Stop!"

"He wants us to stop," she told the driver. "Perhaps my brother has been found."

The mechanic jammed his brakes. Lalock leaped out of his car and came to the side of the Dodge. Agatha opened the door.

"Are you Mrs. Druce?" Lalock asked, with a quick glance inside the car.

"Yes. What is it? Have they found my brother?"

"I'm sure I don't know. I wanted to ask you where Mittie Blaine is."

"Oh!"

"She's with you at the hotel, isn't she?" he inquired, noting her hesitancy and disappointment.

"Who told you?" Agatha fended, for even now she clung to her idea of revenge.

"Her grandfather. I'm Leonard Lalock, of Roan City. Mittie is going to be my wife."

"I see! Yes, she was with me."

"*Was?* You mean she's left you?"

"She started out with my brother yesterday in an open car. They went in this direction. They haven't returned."

"Good God! You mean—"

"I don't know what has happened. I'm looking for them." Agatha's chin quivered, for she loved Ronald. "They've been gone twenty-four hours."

"Why didn't some one start a search before?" he demanded.

"I couldn't get any one to go with me in the storm. They said it was too dangerous."

"*I* would have gone."

"I didn't know you."

"I'm going with you now, if you don't mind."

"No, I don't mind."

Slowly, carefully, the two cars climbed upward. No snow plow had been here. There were sharp turns and treacherous curves, where a skidding car might plunge into a yawning chasm.

Agatha Druce sat with tense hands gripped together. Her eyes were searching, searching.

Lalock's hands gripped the wheel of his limousine, but his eyes, like Agatha's, were searching, searching. He was seething with jealousy, frustration, desire. What was the woman's game? *Her* brother and Mittie!

God, if Mittie was dead! If the forest had robbed him of her, as it had snatched Mary away. He fancied that he could see his dead wife laughing at him from behind that stump, taunting him for his love of a young girl. Mary's spirit was seeking revenge.

God, why did he think of her now? He had hated her. He had hated her penuriousness—the way she had hung on to her fortune. A wife should let her husband handle her money. Mary had been weak in everything but that.

She loved him, but she loved her fortune more.

Her fate was only what she had deserved. He had warned her that there was always the peril of forest fires. Yes, he had warned her. Had he killed her? No, Asa had done it—the old fool! If Mittie was dead, Lalock would send Asa to prison, where he belonged. He was dangerous so long as he was free.

If Mittie lived, Lalock would marry her and take her abroad, leaving old 'Asa to drink himself to death. Lovely child! With education, what a wife! She was worth waiting these years to possess.

He had never thought he would go up Roan Mountain again. He had a horror of the place. Strange he couldn't overcome it. Conscience? Bah! He had no conscience. Only weaklings were troubled with consciences, and he was strong. He took what he wanted, regardless of cost; and nothing could prevent him from taking Mittie.

THE Dodge shot ahead, swung around a curve, and disappeared. Just beyond the curve the road forked. As the Dodge leaped by, Mittie staggered into the main road from the other fork, stumbled, and sank upon a mound of snow. Lalock put on his brakes just in time to avoid striking her.

The driver of the Dodge saw what occurred reflected in his mirror, and also came to a sudden stop.

Lalock sprang from his car and ran to the recumbent figure. One glance informed him who it was.

"Mittie!" he gasped. "Good God! What are you doing here?"

When the girl did not answer, he lifted her in his arms.

"I've found her!" he shouted to the others. "Have you any whisky? She's unconscious."

Agatha left the Dodge and joined him. Her face was ashen, her hands trembled. Mittie here! Where was Ronald?

She had brought a flask of liquor with her, thinking it might be of value. She handed it to Lalock, and he forced some of the liquid between Mittie's white lips.

"Rub her hands with snow," he said, laying the girl on the ground again. "She isn't frozen. I thought at first she was. I've a blanket in my car. I'll get it."

He ran back to his machine, and took a heavy rug from under the seat. When he returned, Agatha was kneeling in the snow, with Mittie's head and shoulders pressed against her. Lalock wrapped the rug about the girl, and, taking her in his arms again, carried her to his car. Agatha followed.

"I'm going back to Roan City as fast as I can," he said. "She may die from exposure out here."

"But where is Ronnie?" sobbed the woman. "Give her more whisky! Bring her to! Make her talk! Where is my brother?"

A faint groan passed the girl's lips. Lalock raised her head and put the flask to her mouth again. She choked. Her eyes opened and met Agatha's. She shuddered.

"Where is Ronnie?" Agatha caught Mittie's hand. "Tell me! Was there an accident?"

"Ronald?" breathed Mittie, her white lips scarcely moving.

"Yes! Is he alive? What happened?"

"He's at the tourist camp—on the road."

"Alive?"

"Yes," said the girl, and her heavy eyes closed again.

"Thank God!" cried Agatha. "Take her with you, Mr. Lalock. I'm going on to find Ronnie!"

SUNLIGHT flooded the white-washed walls of the room where Ronald lay, his dark head buried deep in a pillow, his body only half covered with a blanket, his clothing crumpled from sleeping in it.

The glare pouring through the unshaded windows hit his eyes. He opened them, yawned, stretched himself, then rose to his feet, still a little groggy and uncertain where he was. He felt stiff, tired, hungry.

He crossed to the window and looked out. The morning was clear. No snow or rain was falling, and the air was still. He knocked on the door separating the kitchen. No answer. He knocked again.

"Lady Marjorie! Are you awake?"

Still no answer. Looking at his watch, he saw that it was nine o'clock. Gad, he had slept soundly! He wondered if Marjorie had. Poor girl, what a day she had had!

He knocked again.

"Lady Marjorie!"

He pushed open the door. The bed, with the coverings thrust aside, stood before the stove. The room was empty. Had she gone out to forage for fuel? Surely not in the snow. She should have called him!

He crossed to the kitchen door and flung it open. Outside, everything was white. The ground, the trees, the bushes, were covered with snow. There was no Marjorie in sight.

He called her, cupping his hands over his mouth. An echo came back:

"Marjorie! Marjorie!"

He ran outside, sinking deep in the snow. Footprints! Hers, leading to the main road, going past his car.

He followed them, scanning the road. They led on and on. What had she done? Where had she gone?

God, had she been afraid of him? Had she feared scandal so much that she had risked her life, rather than spend a night alone with him in the tourist hut? It had been snowing last night. Snow would have obscured her footprints. She had waited until morning to leave him. Then why?

He hadn't dreamed that she would be so conventional. She had traveled alone. Surely she knew that he would protect her with the last drop of blood he possessed! Poor child, she was more afraid of wagging tongues than of the wilderness and the blizzard!

There was snow all over his car. He brushed off the seat as best he could, and sat down. The engine was cold, and wouldn't start. He got out and lifted the hood. The snow had sifted under it and packed in a solid mass.

She couldn't be far away, for it was impossible to cover much ground on foot. What time had she left the hut? And he had been sleeping — sleeping, while she wandered around in the snow!

He was vainly tinkering with his car, swearing under his breath, dripping with cold perspiration, when the Dodge came into view.

"Hey, there!" he called. "Give me a hand, will you?"

"Ronnie! Oh, Ronnie!" came a cry from the other car.

"We got caught in the blizzard," he explained to Agatha. "Thought it was just a flurry, and stopped in here for shelter; but the storm kept up and held us here all night. Now my car—"

What was Agatha thinking, staring at him like that? He must protect

Marjorie—must make Agatha realize that everything was all right, and that the storm really was to blame.

"Marjorie — isn't here — now," he added lamely.

"I know. We passed her on the road. She's gone on to town with a friend."

"You found her? She—she wasn't dead?"

"On the contrary, she's very much alive."

"Thank God! Why do you suppose she ran away? Sis, I love her. I told her I'd make Cecily release me, and I'd marry her. She knew I'd protect her. I've been crazy since I missed her!"

"You can't marry her, Ronnie," Agatha said; "and she knows you can't."

"You mean Cecily won't release me? But she will, after last night. She'll understand that we weren't to blame, of course. She's a good sport, and it would make no difference; but if she knew that I loved some one else, she wouldn't want me. No girl would. Besides, I owe more to Marjorie than I do to Cecily. Don't you think so, sis? Even if I didn't love Marjorie, I owe it to her."

"You don't owe anything to her, Ronnie." Agatha's voice was harsh and strained. "You'll have to forget her, for you'll probably never see her again."

"What? Why, what do you mean?"

AGATHA glanced at the mechanic bending over the hood of her brother's machine.

"Ronnie, I don't know how to tell you. I never dreamed I'd get you into it. It started as a joke; then I was sorry for her, and I thought I could help her."

"*Sorry?* Sorry for Lady Marjorie?"

"Ronnie, you mustn't despise me. I'm just sick over it. I'll never forgive myself if this hurts you; but it mustn't. You mustn't let it. Cecily is the girl for you. You'll marry her and forget this other—I'm sure you will."

"Are you crazy? What are you talking about?"

"I'm trying to tell you. She isn't Lady Marjorie at all. Lady Marjorie is in England. This girl is an impostor."

"*What?*"

"A poor little scrub I found living in a box car on the railroad. She's a squatter. Her grandfather is a drunkard—the town ne'er-do-well. She was so pretty that I thought—I thought it would be a great joke to pass her off as a titled woman. Hal Armitage—he—he's such a climber, I thought he—Ronnie! Don't look at me like that, Ronnie!"

"Good God!"

"You see"—she put her hand on his arm, pleading—"you see why she ran away. She knew she couldn't marry you. It wasn't her reputation that she feared would suffer, for she hasn't any reputation. She's poor white trash. Negroes have more standing than she has. I'm sorry for her, but—"

Her brother brushed his hand across his eyes, still staring at her in horror.

"You won't see her again, dear. Oh, I'm so sorry! But you understand, don't you?"

"A joke!" He laughed harshly. "My God, what a joke! And I held her in my arms. She told me she loved me; but perhaps she laughed inwardly when she said it."

"I'm sure she did. She's common enough."

"I've never loved any one before." His young voice was bitter, his eyes were full of pain. "I fell hard the first time I saw her. I can't forget—never!"

"Oh, yes, you will!"

"I won't. You don't know me. As long as I live I'll love her. Thanks to you, my life will be one glorious mess!"

"Oh, Ronnie, no! You're young. You've just been infatuated with a title and a pretty face. Now you know what she is, you'll come to your senses. You're engaged to Cecily."

"In a box car—you say? A squatter on the railroad track?"

"Yes. Why, Ronnie?"

"I'm going to show you whether it's infatuation for a title or a pretty face! You knocked me a twister—I'll admit it—but the girl herself isn't changed. I love *her*, not what I thought she was. I told her I'd marry her, and I'm going to do it!"

"Ronnie, you wouldn't! A squatter!"

"She's beautiful, she's pure, she's everything I want in this world—"

"Without name or position or education?"

"I love her!"

"An impostor?"

He lifted his unconscious burden and bore her to the car

"You made her that. Why did she run away, if she wasn't honest at heart? Why did she say she'd never marry me, when she could easily have roped me in?"

"She knew I'd tell you the truth and prevent the marriage."

Ronnie breathed hard.

"You can't prevent it. Don't you know what love is, Agatha? Don't you know that nothing can stand in its way?"

"I know that if you marry this girl you'll regret it all your life. Oh, Ronnie, don't do anything rash! When you see how she lives, what she is—when you see her old grandfather,

bleary-eyed and shabby — why, she washed clothes for a living—"

"You took her to the Summit House and made a friend of her. You must have seen that she didn't belong in her old environment."

"I had an object. I wanted to get even—with Hal." Her eyes fell. "I loved him, Ronnie. He wouldn't marry me, because I wasn't of enough importance. I *do* know what love is, dear. I've suffered, and I don't want you to suffer. I brought her with me, because it seemed the only way to get even with Hal. I wanted to hurt his vanity—he hasn't any heart. I'm ashamed now—terribly ashamed. I wouldn't tell you, only—"

Ronald was looking straight ahead now, not listening to his sister. He turned and spoke to the mechanic.

"Can you start her up?" he inquired.

"Don't think so," the man replied. "Guess her radiator's busted. Better leave her here and send up a wrecker. You can ride back with me."

DURING the long ride to the hotel, brother and sister sat in silence. Agatha's eyes were filmed with tears. She was yearning over Ronald, and pitying him. She was loathing herself and Armitage. She was full of hatred toward Mittie.

Ronald's face was grim. He looked older, and the light was gone from his eyes. That child in the snow, running away from him! That sweet girl who loved him, running away from him!

Last night she had clung to him, trembling. He would never forget her, never let her slip out of his life. He loved her. Family be damned! Heritage, social position be damned! He would hold her close—close always.

At the hotel Agatha alighted. Her eyes pleaded with her brother to come with her.

"I can't do it, sis," declared Ronald. "I've got to find her."

"But Cecily?"

"I can't think of Cecily now. I'll see her later and explain. She'll think I'm a cad, but I don't care."

"You'll not do anything to-day, Ronnie? You'll think it over first? Promise me that!"

"I can't promise anything."

"Oh, Ronnie, I've been so proud of you! I expected you to do such great things, with Cecily as your wife! I thought you were fine and honorable."

"Honorable?"

"Yes, Ronnie. You've given your word to Cecily, and you can't break it."

"Even honor must yield when love is at stake. You know that, don't you?" She winced. "You should have considered me when you decided to fling her at Armitage. I'm human, as well as he."

Agatha's face was drawn and old-looking as she entered the hotel. She saw Armitage by the desk, and hurried past him without speaking. Soon he would know the truth, and the laugh would be on her, not on him.

It wasn't until the Dodge was going down the mountain that Ronald realized that he didn't know the girl's name—her real name. Well, Agatha had said that she lived in a box car on or near the railroad, and probably he could find that.

"Do you know of any squatters around here?" he asked the mechanic.

"Squatters? Yeh, there's a few—mostly niggers. There's old Asa Blaine, too."

"Has he a granddaughter?"

"Yes—Mittie Blaine. Used to be kind of a pretty girl; but I ain't seen her for a good while."

"Where do they live?"

"Near the railroad track."

"Will you stop there?"

"Sure!"

The mechanic was surprised. What did this swell guy want with squatters?

There was smoke curling out of the chimney that projected from one of the windows, but the box car was empty. Ronald walked around it and knocked on windows and doors, but receive no answer.

"Reckon nobody's at home," said the Dodge driver. "Want me to drive you back up the hill?"

"Yes," Ronald answered listlessly. "You'll see that my car is towed in from Blood Mountain?"

"Sure! I'll send a truck."

CHAPTER X

LALOCK TAKES MITTIE HOME

NOW and then Lalock glanced at the motionless girl by his side. Her face, all but her eyes and nose, was hidden by the rug. Her eyes were open, but there seemed to be a glaze over the pupils. Several times he asked her if she was cold, but she did not answer.

He drove rapidly but cautiously. As they passed the Summit House, he glanced at Mittie. She never moved. If she noticed the hotel at all, she showed no emotion.

"You feel all right, Mittie?"

No answer.

Down the mountain he went, across the strip of railroad, past the box car and the abandoned station, and on into the road that led to Roan City. The girl's silence, her utter indifference, piqued him. She might be ill, but apparently she was conscious.

What had happened, anyway? Why had that woman rigged her out in finery and chopped off her curls? Unquestionably she had been playing some mysterious game.

Turning from Main Street into Oak Avenue, Lalock reached his own home. He went up the driveway to the front door.

"I can walk."

Mittie spoke for the first time when he opened the car door and held out his hands to her. She swayed unsteadily as she stepped from the machine and lurched forward. He caught her in his arms and carried her up the steps and upon the veranda. He kicked at the front door. Mrs. Button opened it.

"Come upstairs with me," he said abruptly.

The old woman followed him to the second story, into a bedroom at the head of the stairs. Her mask of a face did not change as he carried Mittie across the room and placed her upon a large bed.

"She's half frozen," he explained. "Turn on a bath and undress her. I'm going to send for a doctor. I hope she doesn't get pneumonia!"

He left the room.

Crossing to the girl's side, Mrs. Button leaned over her and studied her features. Mittie's eyes, vague and listless, met hers.

"You're pretty," the old woman muttered. "Pretty!"

"Who are you?" Mittie asked.

"Mr. Lalock's housekeeper."

"Is this his home?"

"Yes."

"He brought me here?"

"Yes. Didn't you know it?"

"Perhaps I did. I thought he was with me. Where did he find me?"

"I don't know," said Mrs. Button, her hands fumbling with the loops on Mittie's coat.

"I don't want it off," the girl said. "I'm awfully cold."

"He says you're to take a hot bath."

The old woman left her and went into the bathroom. Mittie heard the water running. It sounded like a waterfall in the distance. She closed her eyes again. The bed was comfortable.

The housekeeper came back, half dragged the clothing from her, and helped her into the steaming tub. Mittie's head drooped. This was better than the snow. This was Lalock's house, but it didn't matter much where you were. Nothing mattered much.

She wasn't dead. She was glad she wasn't dead.

Mrs. Button rubbed her vigorously with a bath towel, led her back to the bed, and tucked the covers about her.

"I'll get you some hot tea, and then you can sleep," she said.

Mittie was lying in a stupor halfway between waking and sleeping when Lalock ushered in a doctor. The medical man felt her pulse, tested her temperature, and announced that she had no fever.

"She'll be all right. Let her rest," he said. "To-morrow she'll be as fit as a fiddle."

LALOCK sat down beside the bed and took one of Mittie's listless hands in his. Mrs. Button, standing in the door, watched him with puffy lids lowered.

"You must take good care of her, Button," he said. "She's going to be my wife."

"Yes, sir."

"You don't think she's too young for me?"

"That's for you to decide, sir. When is the wedding to be, sir?"

"To-morrow. Yes, I think we shall be married to-morrow."

"Yes, sir. Do you wish any special preparations to be made?"

Lalock stroked the little hand he held.

"No, I think not. A somewhat nicer dinner than usual, and flowers. You can get some from the florist's, Button. We must have everything beautiful around her. She's a lovely girl, and must be surrounded with lovely things."

"She's very pretty," said the toneless voice.

"Were you ever young and good-looking, Button?"

"They say I—wasn't unattractive as a girl, sir. Age plays pranks with one's features and skin."

"It does." He looked at her steadily. Not a muscle changed in her pasty face, but the thick, ugly lids drooped over her eyes. "It certainly does—if *you* were ever attractive!"

The woman bowed. Lalock leaned over the girl.

"Mittie!" he said. Her eyes opened. "Mittie, do you know where you are?"

"Yes, I know."

"Did you hear what I said to my housekeeper? I'm going to marry you to-morrow."

"Yes, I heard."

"To-morrow is all right with you, dear?"

For a moment her great sad eyes met his.

"It's all right," she said dully.

What was the difference — to-morrow, next week, next year? She would have to marry him some day. Why fight any longer?

"I'll tell your grandfather to-night, dear. He will be pleased." He rose and laid her hand on the blue satin coverlet. "Mrs. Button will take good care of you. Make her like you, Button," he added. "If she doesn't, you'll

have to look for another job, and they aren't very easy to find at your age."

"I'll do my best, sir."

The housekeeper wandered noiselessly about the room, picking up, dusting a piece of furniture with her apron, straightening a scarf on the dresser, pushing a chair into place, and arranging the bathroom. Now and then she glanced at the motionless figure on the bed, and a muscle under her right eye twitched like a live thing.

Mittie watched her noiseless movements. A lethargy had settled upon the girl. She did not seem to have any feelings, and her brain was numb.

The woman came close to her.

"Do you want anything before I go downstairs?"

"No, thank you. Did he call you Mrs. Button?"

"Yes."

"It's—it's a funny name!"

"Yes. He didn't tell me your name."

"Mittie Blaine." No need to lie, now. What a strange-looking woman, with her mouth on one side, and such an ugly white face!

"Oh!" The bony hands moved under her apron.

"You've heard of me?" Mittie said, her lips tightening.

"Yes. Why are you going to marry Mr. Lalock? Do you love him?"

"No, but he wants me to marry him, and I might as well."

"He's rich," said the housekeeper. "You'll have everything money can buy. I suppose that will make you happy."

"I don't know. Money can't buy happiness, can it?"

"It depends upon what your idea of happiness is. You're young and pretty. You could do better than Leonard Lalock, I fancy."

"No! If you've heard of me, you know I couldn't. He loves me, and I think he'll be kind to me."

"He's been kind to me—very kind," Mrs. Button said. "I hope he lets me stay on."

"Why not?"

"He won't need my services with you here. I may be in the way." She moved slowly to the door. "If you want anything, pull that cord at the head of your bed."

THE clerk at the desk of the Summit House handed some small sheets of paper to Agatha Druce.

"Miss Howard telephoned you several times, Mrs. Druce," he told her. "She wanted you to get in touch with her right away. Here are the slips."

Agatha took the pieces of paper, and read:

> Miss Howard phoned at ten o'clock.
> Miss Howard phoned at eleven o'clock.
> Miss Howard phoned at 11.30.
> 11.45—Miss Howard wants you to phone her when you come in.

No doubt Cecily was anxious about Ronald. Well, Agatha could at least inform her that there had been no accident, and that Ronald was alive. Let him tell her the rest.

From a booth in the lobby she asked for the Howards' telephone number. There was a hysterical note in Cecily's voice when it came over the wire.

"Why didn't Ronnie phone me? Hasn't he come in yet? What happened?"

"His car got stalled in the snow. Nothing really happened, except that they had to take shelter in a tourist camp overnight and wait for some one to rescue them."

"Alone?"

"She—er—Lady Marjorie wasn't

there when I found Ronnie." Agatha was trying to find some way to protect herself and her brother. "He's all right. He left his machine and came back in a service car."

"But they were alone all night?" Cecily persisted.

"Ye-es."

A short laugh from Cecily.

"Why hasn't Ronnie called me up?"

"He will. He's utterly worn out now, but he'll telephone you soon."

"I fancy that just now he's thinking more about Lady Marjorie's reputation than of me."

"Don't be silly!" Agatha snapped. "Have luncheon with us. You and Ronnie can have it out then."

She hung up the receiver, for she was too tired to argue.

Armitage stopped her on the way to the elevator.

"You didn't find them?" he asked.

"Yes, I found them. Her—her *fiancé* took her into town."

"*Fiancé?* I thought she was a stranger here."

"No, she has—no, she's not a stranger."

Hal had been inquiring about the girl! What a laugh on Agatha when the truth came out! She would have to leave. She couldn't face it.

Suppose Ronald married the girl today! In his present state of mind he was capable of doing anything. He was crazy about her, and Mittie was mad about him. She must be, to risk Mrs. Druce's displeasure and all that it would cost her.

At half past twelve Ronald came into the hotel. He did not call his sister, but went to his room. He was too restless to stay there long. Later in the day he would go back to the box car. He did not want to talk to Agatha. Some one had taken Marjorie—no, not Marjorie, but Mittie—into town. He would find her. He would learn from her grandfather where she was. Agatha might lie to him. She would do anything to prevent his seeing the girl again.

His cloudy eyes and morose expression kept away any would-be questioners, and he wandered about the office alone. He glanced over a newspaper, tried to write a letter, looked at the clock, and walked out on the veranda and back again. Agatha's revelation had shaken him to the core of his being. Her deception, as well as the girl's, was hard to forgive. He blamed Agatha more than Mittie. He would learn the real truth from Mittie—yes, and he would marry her, even if all his friends cut him.

THE sight of Cecily in the doorway startled him. He wasn't ready to talk to her yet. It wasn't easy to tell a woman who loved you that you were in love with another girl.

"Well?" Cecily tried to smile, but her lips quivered. "You're a nice one, to make me phone and phone to find out whether you're living or dead!"

"I didn't know you telephoned," he answered miserably.

"Didn't you think I would when I heard you were out in that blizzard?"

"I didn't know you had heard of it."

"It happens that I lunched here yesterday, and Agatha had to tell me where you had gone; otherwise I probably wouldn't have heard anything about it. I don't think *you* would have told me."

Under the soft brim of her antelope hat her blue eyes studied his gloomy face.

"Perhaps not. If the storm hadn't come up, there would have been no

need to mention it and nothing to tell."

They moved through an archway into a secluded sun parlor. He drew out a chair for her to sit down, but remained standing himself.

She laughed nervously.

"Got a little crush on her ladyship, Ron?"

His eyes avoided hers.

"Why do you ask that?" he returned.

"Something tells me so—a little bird called intuition. You should be rejoicing that you are still alive, but you look like a thunder cloud."

"Do I?"

"Where's her ladyship?"

"Don't call her that," he snapped.

"Why not? Not touchy about her, are you?"

He did not answer. Cecily crossed her knees and wrapped her long arms about them.

"Where were you during the blizzard?" she inquired.

"Sheltering in a tourist camp. Luckily we found it before things got too bad."

"Was she worried?"

"Yes."

"I don't wonder. There are cats around this hotel. I'll bet their tongues are wagging now!"

"I suppose so."

"Ronnie, look at me." No longer was Cecily bantering. She spoke seriously. "What's the matter?"

"Cecily, you're a good sort, and I'm awfully fond of you, but—"

"You love her?"

"Yes."

"I was sure of it. You've been different since she came. I've felt it. Last night alone with her — you've found out that you don't want to marry me. Is that it, Ronnie?"

"Yes. Oh, I'm sorry, Cecily!"

"Does she—want to marry you?"

"She loves me."

Cecily rose slowly, and stood for a moment by his side.

"I said I'd fight to hold you, Ronnie, but I don't think I will. Pride wouldn't let me fight—and something else."

"Cecily!"

"I love you too much to make you unhappy." She held out her hand. "I wish you joy."

"I'm sorry!" He took her hand and held it, looking down at her. "I'm sorrier than I can say."

"Forget it! You meant to be square. I knew you didn't love me. I hoped you would in time; but now you never will. You're a nice lad, Ronnie!"

"You're a wonderful girl, Cecily!"

"Ye-es? Glad you think so." She kissed the tips of her fingers, then pressed them against his lips. "Call me later, will you? And please apologize to Agatha. I said I'd stay here for luncheon, but I don't quite feel like eating now. By, by!"

She laughed again, but as she walked away there were tears in her eyes, though her head was held high.

A very wretched young man watched her tall, slender figure as it passed through the hotel lobby and across the veranda. Would he regret what he had done? Agatha said he would, all his life. Would Mittie's soft lips compensate for the loss of family, position, Cecily? What a brick Cecily was! And he had hurt her. God, why did love cause such suffering?

THREE times during the afternoon Ronald trudged down the snowy mountainside to the box car, but he found no one there. Once, after it was dark, he drove down in

the car that the wrecker had brought him; but neither Mittie nor old Asa was at home.

It was late afternoon of the following day before he could drag himself out of bed and go down the mountain again. Every bone in his body was aching, his head throbbed, and a fever made him dizzy and weak. Outraged nature was taking its toll.

"I can't live without you," he groaned; "not if you love me too—I can't!"

His trip was successful this time. Asa, in a drunken stupor, sprawled beside the cookstove in the kitchen. It was a repulsive scene that staggered Ronald and made his gorge rise. He shook the squatter by the shoulders and wakened him.

"What—you want?" mumbled Asa, blinking his red eyes.

"Where is your granddaughter? I want to talk to her."

"She's not here," said Asa, and his eyes closed again.

"Where is she?"

"Eh?"

"*Where* is she?"

"Lalock's—Leonard Lalock's."

"Where is that?"

Asa grinned.

"Don't you know Lalock? He's mos' prominent citizen in Roan City. Mos' prominent, and my friend. I'm mos' disreputable citizen. Lalock has a grand house — house on Oak Avenue—I got a box car on the railroad tracks; but we're friends. Friends for twenty years — no, twenty-five years.

Lalock's clever man, very clever business man, but I'm clever, too. Some day—what you want with Mittie?"

"I want to talk to her." This man her grandfather? This place her home? Oh, impossible! That lovely girl! "Will she be away long?"

"Ye-es. If you want to talk to her, you'll have to go to Lalock's. She's not coming back here. She's Lalock's wife now—married him at noon to-day."

"*What?* Married?" The young man reeled and stumbled against the pine table. "Mittie *married?*"

Asa nodded.

"Yes. I wasn't invited to the wedding. Wouldn't have me; but he told me they were married to-day at noon."

"Oh, good God!"

Ronald was dimly conscious of the blood that raced through his veins and pounded in his temples. The floor seemed to sway beneath his feet, the lights grew fainter and then brighter, the walls of the box car closed in on him and then receded.

Mittie was married! She had run away from him—from Agatha—from the truth. She had thought his love wasn't big enough to stand the revelation of her real identity. She had married another man, although she loved Ronald.

He stumbled out of the box car, across blackened mounds of snow, through melted pools of snow, over the railroad tracks into his machine. Mittie was his! This Lalock, whoever he was, shouldn't have her. Ronald had given up Cecily for her, and had defied Agatha. God, he would kill any man who separated them!

A burning fever heated his blood, racked his bones, and obscured his sight. The road writhed in red coils before him, rising and falling like the waves of a stormy sea. He felt that he was becoming a madman.

CHAPTER XI

"SOME ONE SHOT HIM!"

"AND now, my dear"—the Rev. Samuel Sampson, near-sighted, a little deaf, bent over Mittie's cold hand—"let me wish you great happiness. You have married a fine man, a very good man, one of our best church workers, and—er—a generous man."

"Yes," said Mittie faintly, her white lips scarcely moving.

"And you"—Mr. Sampson turned to Lalock—"you are to be congratulated, my dear brother, on having so young and lovely a bride."

"Yes, yes," Lalock answered impatiently, "I know I am!"

"You will continue to live in Roan City, I hope?"

"I don't know. I think my wife and I will go abroad shortly, possibly for a year. After that our plans are uncertain. Good-by, Mr. Sampson, and thank you very much."

Mittie, white, numb, terrified, looked about the big room. She saw Mrs. Button by the window, silent, motionless, and Candace, the colored maid, all excitement. They had witnessed the ceremony. Mr. Sampson, white-haired, bland, was smiling behind his eyeglasses and wishing her happiness—happiness with this man almost as old as her grandfather, this man whom she had married to save Asa from the law, this man whose touch made her flesh writhe. Happiness! She would never be happy again.

Ronald—Ronald, who had held her in his arms and told her that he loved her—where was he? She would never see him again. He knew what she

was—not Mittie Blaine now, but Mrs. Lalock, wife of the Roan City banker; not a squatter girl any more, but wife of a prominent citizen. Oh, it was funny! All life was funny!

She crushed her hand against her mouth to choke back her laughter—laughter that was a heartbreak. She had wanted to die, and she hadn't died. She had married Lalock.

Mrs. Button's eyes were studying her face. What an ugly woman! It must be terrible to be so ugly that people hate to look at you.

The minister was gone, Candace was gone, and now Mrs. Button was gone. If Lalock touched her, she would scream. Thank God, he was also leaving the room.

"I'll be back for dinner, Mittie. I think you would rather be alone now."

"Yes, I would."

"Marriage isn't such an awful thing, child. In a month from now you'll be grateful to me for taking you out of the trouble you were in. I'm going to be very kind to you, Mittie. I'm going to teach you to love me."

"Yes, sir."

This was her home. This big room with the wide fireplace, soft rugs, many books, and polished furniture, was her home now. She could sit on the veranda in summer, under that window. She could watch the roses in bloom, the pansies, the verbenas, the tiger lilies. It would be beautiful in summer.

She moved about restlessly, her cold hands touching a book or a magazine, pulling at the velvet draperies on the window, plucking at the folds of her dress. She stood at the window opening upon the garden. The snow had melted where the sun's rays had reached it. Little sprouts of green peeped through the moist ground.

That painting was a portrait of the first Mrs. Lalock. Mittie was the second. Perhaps the first Mrs. Lalock had loved him. *She* never would—never, even if she hadn't known Ronald. Perhaps in time this terrible ache would go away. Perhaps in time she would grow used to the big house, with its shadows, and the sunlight closed out by heavy vines and clumps of trees. Perhaps she would not shudder when she looked at that weird old woman who stared at her with dead, fishy eyes.

Hours dragged by. She sat on the divan before the fire. She was cold—cold clear through to her heart. She felt that she would never be warm again.

Mrs. Button knocked gently and came in with a tea tray.

"I thought you might like some tea," she said. She placed the tray on a small table beside Mittie, and poured it. "You don't look very well."

"I'm all right."

"Every young girl is a little nervous when she's first married."

"Were you?"

"Yes; and I loved the man I married very much."

"I don't love Mr. Lalock."

Why had she said this? It wasn't right to say such things, now that she was his wife.

"I know you don't," said the housekeeper. "You didn't want to marry him, did you?"

"No."

"Drink this tea. You'll feel happier to-morrow. You'll get used to marriage. One gets used to everything."

Mittie lifted the cup and sipped the liquid slowly. Poor old soul! She wanted to be friendly and kind.

The doorbell rang. Mrs. Button slipped out of the room.

Ronald's voice! Ronald at the door!

"I want to see Mrs. Lalock," he was saying.

Mittie sprang to her feet and ran into the hallway.

"Ronald!"

He came toward her, brushing by the housekeeper. He lurched unsteadily as he walked. His face was crimson, his eyes bloodshot.

"You came here!" she sobbed. "You came here!"

MRS. BUTTON closed the hall door and stood watching as Mittie's hands fluttered out, took Ronald's, and led him into the library.

"Your grandfather said you were married." He spoke in a thick, unnatural voice. "Is it true?"

He had seen Asa! He knew now who she was, yet he had come after her!

"Is it true?" he demanded again.

"Yes."

He kicked the door shut, and faced her, leaning against it.

"Why did you do it? Didn't you trust me? I said I'd break off with Cecily, and I have. Why did you marry some one else?"

"I thought—hasn't Agatha told you about me?"

"Yes, but do you think that makes any difference? I love you! I don't care who you are or what you are. Didn't you believe I loved you?"

"Yes, only—"

Her head sank.

"You didn't mean what you said—is that it?" inquired Ronald. "You were lying when you told me you loved me—just as you were lying when you pretended to be somebody else?"

"Oh, no! I loved you—I love you now. I'll never love any one else."

"But you married some one else. You didn't wait to see what I'd do. You didn't give me a chance."

She came over to him, her hands clasped upon her bosom, her eyes pleading, saying what her lips could not utter.

"I can't explain; only I do love you—and I'm so miserable!"

He caught her hands, pulled them down, and kissed them.

"I can't give you up!" he groaned. "If you love me, I can't give you up! No one else has a right to you." She swayed. His arms, wrapped around her, held her close to him. "You're mine. I won't give you up!"

She sobbed softly, her face pressed against his shoulder. He kissed her hair and her forehead, murmuring endearments that she scarcely heard. He raised her face and kissed her lips, lingeringly, tenderly.

Neither heard the outer door open and close. Neither heard the library door open, or was conscious of Lalock's presence until he stepped into the room.

"Mittie!" he cried, and his voice was like a sword thrust between them.

Mittie, her face drained of color, drew away from Ronald's arms. Ronald, his eyes blazing, his heart pounding, faced the livid man who advanced.

"Who is this?" Lalock demanded.

"Ronald Standish," the girl stammered. "I—I was with him yesterday—on the mountain—"

"You're Mr. Lalock?" asked Ronald, throwing back his shoulders.

"I am, and I'm her husband. What are you doing here?"

RONNIE, fever-ridden, incapable of subtlety or reasoning, burst into a peal of cynical laughter.

"*You!* An old man like you her

husband! It's horrible! You married her! Do you think I'll let a marriage like that stand between us? I'm here because she belongs to me? She loves me—do you hear?—and I love her! I don't care *that* for the ceremony you've had performed!"

He snapped his fingers defiantly in Lalock's face.

"Why, you damned cub!" Lalock lurched forward and struck the young man a blow on his mouth. Mittie screamed. Ronald staggered back and supported himself against the wall.

"You get out of here!" Lalock roared. "Get out of here, or I'll—"

"Make me!" shouted Ronald, grinning through a trickle of blood from his bruised lip. "Make me go! I won't leave here without her! No leather-faced old scoundrel can take my girl away! I said I was going to marry her, and I'll do it in spite of you and your wedding!"

"Ronald!" the girl shrilled. "Ronald!"

"You get out of here!" Lalock's fingers fumbled in the open drawer of the oak table. "You get out of here now!"

He held a revolver leveled steadily before him.

"I'm not afraid of that, either!" Ronald muttered thickly.

The floor was whirling under him, and spots of red were dancing before his eyes.

"Ronald, go! For God's sake, go!" Mittie sobbed.

"Put that damned thing down, will you?" he said, moving toward the table. "I'm not afraid of your threats. I'll go when I'm ready!"

"If you don't go, I'll—"

A sharp explosion. The pistol dropped from Lalock's hand, clattered upon the table, and fell to the carpet. Lalock groaned, swayed, and slumped forward across the table, with his arms stretched out before him. His body twisted, jerked, and then lay very still.

Mittie's cry of terror ended in a low wail of horror. Ronald stood tense, frozen to silence. Their eyes, widening, glazed, stared at the hole in Lalock's temple—a dark, ugly hole, from which red blood dripped upon the white paper under his head.

"My God!" Ronald muttered. "What happened?"

"Did his gun go off?" asked Mittie, still staring at the body.

"He's dead." Ronald jerked himself across the room and touched Lalock's hand. "He's dead, Mittie."

"Did his gun go off?" she repeated.

He stooped and picked up the revolver.

"It's cold. No, that gun didn't do it. Some one—some one shot him."

Her knees crumpled under her. She sank shuddering into a chair.

"Some one shot him," repeated Ronald.

Still holding the revolver, he stared down at Lalock. There was a knock on the door.

"Has anything happened? Was that a shot?"

Mrs. Button, followed by Candace, came into the room.

"Some one—shot him," Ronald said. "It must have been done through the window."

The housekeeper's eyes turned quickly to the table, and then fastened on Ronald, swaying drunkenly with the pistol in his hand.

"I'll phone for the police," she said.

THE sheriff, Dr. Wren, the coroner, and Roan City's one policeman answered Mrs. Button's call. Such a thing as the murder of a

prominent citizen had never occurred in their community before. Negroes had had shooting scrapes and carved one another with razors, and a tramp had been found dead near the railroad station; but no one of importance had ever been deliberately killed. It was an event that demanded the activity of all the officers of law and order.

Great excitement prevailed around the county jail. The news spread quickly. Bert Higgenbottom, editor of the Roan City *News*, Lalock's property, stopped at his own home to tell his wife what had happened, then followed the officers out to the house on Oak Avenue to get the full details for his newspaper.

Ten minutes after Sheriff Gayner appeared on the scene, a crowd of villagers gathered in the front yard and were scrambling for admittance. They were held off with difficulty by Policeman Merwin.

Neither Mittie nor Ronald, in the grip of a horror that left them speechless, had thought of trying to leave the room. Ronald was too ill to be capable of reasoning clearly, or to realize the dangerous position in which he stood. He had placed the revolver on the table, and, because he could no longer stand, had dropped on the divan, where he now lay with his eyes closed.

Mittie sobbed with terror as she huddled in a chair close by. She had never seen death before, and this was a terrible death. The man whom she had just married had been murdered before her eyes. One moment he had been threatening the life of Ronald Standish, whom she loved; the next, he himself had been snapped out of the world.

Sone one who had hated Lalock had destroyed him—some one who hated him far more than Mittie hated him. Her grandfather? No, he feared Lalock, but he didn't hate the man. Ah, but old Asa had assured her that she would never be the banker's wife. Had he—

Sheriff Gayner, a big, breezy man with a red mustache and black hair, came into the room, followed by Merwin, in his police uniform, and by Coroner Wren, a small, sandy-complexioned physician with grayish yellow hair and many gold teeth.

MITTIE knew the sheriff by sight, but he did not recognize her here in a well-fitting gown; nor did he know the young man reclining on the sofa.

Mrs. Button slipped noiselessly into the room behind the officer.

"Who are you?" Gayner brusquely demanded of Mittie.

"Mittie—er—Mrs. Lalock," she answered hesitantly.

"Mrs. Lalock? Thought he was a widower."

"We were married to-day."

"Sorry! I didn't know that. And you?" the sheriff added, to Ronald.

Ronald sat up.

"Ronald Standish. I'm stopping at the Summit House."

"Tourist, eh?" There was suspicion in the sheriff's eyes. "You was a friend of Mr. Lalock?"

"No, but of—her." Ronald couldn't bring himself to say "of his wife." "I never saw him until to-day."

"H-m!" Gayner lifted the revolver from the table and weighed it in his hand. "Is this what shot him?"

"Oh, no!" from Mittie.

Gayner broke open the revolver.

"Five empty shells—one bullet left. What do you know about this?"

Ronald steadied himself by holding the arm of the divan.

"Not—much. Mr. Lalock had it in his hand when—there was a shot—and he fell forward. I think the shot came from that window. It happened so suddenly I couldn't tell."

He indicated the window which opened on the garden.

"Lalock had this gun in his hand? Why?"

Ronald's gaze shifted.

"He—he was pointing it at me."

The three other men stared at him. Then Dr. Wren glanced toward the sheriff, and his eye closed.

"Why should he point a gun at you?"

Ronnie swallowed. Might as well tell the truth now. He would have to sooner or later.

"He ordered me to leave the house, and I wouldn't go."

"Is that so, Mrs. Lalock?"

Mittie nodded assent.

"And why"—Gayner coughed behind his hand— "did he order you out?"

"Because—well, I thought she—er—Mrs. Lalock was going to marry me. I came here to find out if it was true that she had married him."

Ronald tried to show defiance, but his shoulders sagged and his knees wobbled.

"Oh! So you and Mrs. Lalock were sweethearts? And you quarreled over her?"

"No, we didn't quarrel. There wasn't time for a quarrel. He ordered me out of here. I refused to go. He caught up the gun, and then — there was a shot, and he fell just as you see him—across the table."

Gayner swung around to the housekeeper.

"Was there a quarrel, Mrs. Button?"

"I don't know. I let the young man in, and Mrs. Lalock ran out to meet him. She seemed very much pleased to see him. They came in here. I didn't see Mr. Lalock when he came in the house, but"—she hesitated, and her twisted mouth quivered—"I heard loud voices."

"Angry voices?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where were you at the time?"

"In the dining room. It's across the hall. The door was open."

"Did you hear what they said?"

"No, sir. Then I heard the shot and came here to find out what it was. I saw him—Mr. Lalock. That gentleman said some one had shot him; so I telephoned to you."

Gayner turned to Mittie.

"Did you hear the shot too?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did this young man shoot your husband?"

"NO! Oh, no!" Mittie sprang to her feet, her face livid. "He couldn't have done it!"

"There's only one bullet left in this gun" — the sheriff looked steadily at Ronald — "and there's smoke on the muzzle."

"It's cold," Ronald answered. "It was cold when it fell from his hand. At first I thought it had been fired at me. Then I lifted it and found it was cold."

"H-m!"

Gayner stroked his red mustache. He crossed to the window. It was halfway open. He touched the lace curtains and sniffed at them. Then he came back to the table, looked at the dead man, and whispered to Dr. Wren, who was bending over the body.

"Bullet hole through the temple. Where were you standing when the shot was fired?" he asked Ronald.

"As I am now, facing you," the young man replied. "Mrs. Lalock was there with her back to the window. We were both looking at him."

"And you think some one shot him through that window?"

"I'm sure of it."

Dr. Wren coughed. His light eyes peered at Mittie through his glasses.

"I've seen you before, haven't I?"

"Yes, sir. I've always lived here. I'm—er—I was Mittie Blaine."

"I thought so!" Dr. Wren removed his glasses and wiped them. "You've just married Leonard Lalock, you say?"

"Yes, sir."

"But you had promised to marry this young man?"

"No, sir—I hadn't promised. I had told him that I loved him"—her voice became lower—"but I didn't promise to marry him."

"So when you married Mr. Lalock you were in love with another man?"

"Yes, sir; but I—"

Why was the coroner asking such questions? He was sneering at her love for Ronald, and trying to make it look as if she was a bad woman. Just as if—

"You preferred Mr. Lalock's wealth and position to this young man's love?" the coroner continued relentlessly.

"No! No! I didn't!" Mittie sobbed. "I didn't think he would marry me. I didn't think—"

"Keep still, dear," Ronald interrupted. "Don't answer any more questions." He turned to Wren. "Perhaps you aren't aware of it, but my position and fortune are equal to Mr. Lalock's, and perhaps better."

"Yeh?" Sheriff Gayner drawled. "What d'ye say, doc?"

"Arrest him as a suspect," answered the coroner slowly; "and hold the girl as a material witness until after the inquest."

"Arrest?" Mittie cried out.

She ran to Ronald. He took her hands and patted them, drawing her close.

"That doesn't mean anything," he whispered. "I—I expected it when they began their questions. It's all right, dear—quite all right." Then, with an effort at bravado, he addressed the sheriff. "I suppose you have a jail here?" he inquired.

"We have, and that's where you're going!"

"As you say." He staggered, caught at the divan again, and steadied himself. "Do you mind taking my arm?" he asked. "I'm a little shaky on my pins. Caught cold, I think. Thank you, that's better."

At the door Dr. Wren spoke to the housekeeper.

"I'll want you all here to-morrow," he said. "Don't let any one into this house."

The woman bowed her white head.

"I understand. You've no need of me now?"

"No. Go about your business."

"My name is Dier," he said, boldly. Winnie heard a chuckle behind her

The Battle of Flowers

Memories lurked in the heart of a forget-me-not; pride nodded from the petals of an orchid; but in the heart of a crimson rose lay—love!

By Daisy Dalyrimple

THE summer morning when it all began was gay with sunshine, sweet with the pepper of nasturtiums trailing from window boxes. Winnie sniffed the air like a runaway puppy. Like a colt leaping a fence to long desired pastures.

She was on her way to buy out the Arcady Flower Shop.

Actually she was. In the green and brown bag clutched to her excited young heart was a gigantic roll of bills—bigger than any she had ever dreamed of. On her head was a new hat with a charming, close brim that fitted her face like the corolla of a flower. Inclosing her like a calyx was a green and sand sports silk with one of those tricky jacket effects. On her feet, mottled green sports slippers.

So mad and merry and triumphant was she that she had boldly stolen three

nasturtiums from a window box. Peppery and excited, they danced along with her.

There it was—that bit of Arcady! A jungle of cool palms and ferns, of lady slippers, roses, and spirea, all welcoming her from the show window.

"I love you, darlings—every one of you," she rhapsodied.

"No, no," said a voice from within. "I don't want that—it's too like a valentine . . . Take the paper doily away and make a frame of maiden hair . . . Gosh, let me at it, boy. Your mother may call you artistic, but don't believe all she says."

A chorus of giggles. "Daddy! That's one on you. Here—take my apron."

"Yellow roses here . . . and some of those small daisies . . . one big orchid . . ."

Winnie swept in. She saw the owner of the shop standing with a group by a show case. He wore a broad grin.

"Oh, Mr. Sweeting," said Winnie, "I've got it—I've got the money!"

"Well, for crying out loud!"

"Yes, a dear old gentleman made me a loan—at quite a low rate of interest."

"And they say there're no fairies!"

Mr. Sweeting stared at her admiringly. So did his daughters. And so did the youth in shirt sleeves and apron, squatted on the floor by the show case. Winnie thought briefly that Sweeting must have been giving him a lesson in flower arrangement.

FOR six weeks she had been trying to buy out the Arcady florist business. But until to-day the owner had merely laughed at the small capital she could offer in cash.

"Why, this is the best stand in Marchtown," he had told her. "And my terms are cash. Nothing less."

Probably he had never believed she could get the money. All the same he had been more or less polite about it, because Winnie was the sort of girl to whom a man, young or old, genial or surly, is always more or less polite. Now he would have liked to hear more about the "dear old gentleman," but Winnie was talking business.

"Can you let me in day after to-morrow?"

"Great sardine—you don't let the cobwebs tangle your feet, do you, young woman? Don't you want me to teach you some of the tricks?" he offered.

Winnie dimpled. "I've worked with florists, Mr. Sweeting. I can make wreaths and all that. Of course, I'd just love to have you—as a friend and a guest, you know. But I thought you said that once you got your price you couldn't move out West fast enough—"

"Say no more, lady," said Sweeting. "Let it never be said of me that I don't allow eager young folks to ruin themselves in a big way."

"You are so kind. Of course I'll want you to tell me about the standing orders and the charge accounts, and, oh, yes—I thought perhaps you'd have some one who'd be willing to stay on with me—a boy to deliver and—and do odd jobs . . ."

Winnie paused.

She looked over the group by the show case, Sweeting's two daughters and their companion in shirt sleeves and apron. He was a nice-looking boy with pink cheeks and smoothly brushed hair, a short nose that just escaped turning up, two engaging brown eyes, and a chin, the fierceness of which was nearly ruined by a dimple. Winnie took an instant liking to him.

"I'm going to ask him!" she told Mr. Sweeting.

"Hey—who—what—"

But she had already joined the group.

"What a lovely spray you've made!" she exclaimed flatteringly. "I think you're quite an artist."

The boy seemed pleased. "Shall I tie it with ribbon or that frothy stuff?"

Winnie nibbled a finger and pondered the question. "I think—maline, of both shades."

"Is that the frothy stuff?"

"Yes."

He beamed upon her, and Winnie said impulsively:

"I do wish you'd stay on here and work for me. I see you have good ideas, and you might do things round the shop as well as—deliver orders—"

Sweeting interrupted with a whole minor scale of splutterings. She forestalled him by saying quickly:

"Oh, of course I didn't mean to try to take him from you, Mr. Sweeting—"

"No, no"—he spluttered some more—"say, look here, Miss Masters, you're barking—"

"That's all right, uncle," the nice-looking youth interrupted. "Now that you're going away I'm out of a job, aren't I? Let the lady make me an offer!" And he checked a further threatened protest by repeating, even more firmly: "I said—let her make me an offer!"

"But I haven't the vaguest idea how much," said Winnie. "It would be simpler if you'd tell me what you're getting now."

This was greeted with silence. Sweeting watered a pot of ferns. His daughters also busied themselves. The boy squatting on the floor said at last:

"That'll be all right, ma'am. At the end of the week give me what you think I've earned."

So nice and modest of him!

"But can you drive a car?"

"Anything on wheels."

"Then that's fine. We'll settle the salary at the end of the week."

Having disposed of his bouquet, he dusted his hands and rose to his feet. Winnie, following that smoothly brushed head, twisted her own up and back. Then back some more.

"Goodness," she exclaimed, "you're fearfully tall. Do you know, at first I thought you were only about sixteen."

"It's the pink cheeks that give me that innocent sort of look, ma'am," said the boy. "And this apron makes it even worse."

Winnie frowned, not quite sure whether she was being laughed at. But his lips, at least, were serious.

"What is your name?" she asked.

Flash of white teeth. He smiled at her in a singularly winning way and presently told her: "Dier Sweeting."

"What a strange name! How do you spell it—I mean the first one?"

"D-i-e-r."

"Oh—I see! Well, then, you'll be here at nine, day after to-morrow?"

"Sure thing, ma'am."

Winnie turned to Mr. Sweeting with a beaming smile. "Hasn't everything worked out beautifully? Why, I even have your nephew on my staff now."

"You've sure made a haul," said Sweeting in an odd tone. And they settled to a crisp exchange of cash and receipts.

On her way home Winnie stopped at the ten cent store. She bought a dozen gnarled brown vases like miniature tree trunks, and a number of dolls and tiny motor cars. In the end she had to make two trips to carry them all to her shabby little room. For the rest of

the day she worked diligently making doll's clothes.

NEVER in all her twenty years had she felt such a thrill as on the morning when she first dressed her windows. *Her* show windows . . . her very own show windows.

There was Dier Sweeting in overalls, a giant figure of a lad. There was the early customer popping in. There were the flowers arriving in two lots from the nurseries. Such a lot to do.

"You see, I have ideas about window dressing," she told Dier. "I believe that if you can attract a crowd your sales take care of themselves. So I'm going to put on a new window show every three days—something unusual."

"With dolls?"

"Yes. No matter how much ashamed of it they are, every one loves dolls. Even men. Even serious men like bank presidents and church wardens. Just wait till they see our Battle of Flowers."

Dier laughed. "I'll say you have ideas."

He flung himself whole-heartedly into the game. In the window they made an avenue of tree-trunk vases which they filled with asparagus fern and small-headed flowers to give drooping branch effects. Through them they slung Christmas tree lanterns. The ten-cent automobiles they turned into handsome flower-decked floats manned with dolls in fancy costumes—Harlequins, Pierettes, ballet girls, fairies. A small futile police officer they stationed to direct traffic. But he, too, was smothered in flowers. Flowers everywhere.

"I tell you," said Dier excitedly, "there should be a city square—and a fountain. Wait a minute."

He dashed across the street to an art shop and returned with a tiny figure of Cupid. With a flat stone jar, some colored stones and water plant he made a handsome little fountain. One long piece of quarter-inch rubber tubing he ran to a tap fitted with a connecting graduate. Another piece he ran to a floor drain. Presently he had a tricky little cascade of water continually running in and siphoning out.

Winnie clapped her hands in joy. "You *are* clever! How old are you—er—Dier?" At his extraordinary name she colored faintly.

"How old would you take me for?"

"When you were sitting on the floor yesterday I thought you were sixteen, but sometimes—well, you might be over twenty."

"Then I must be older than you," he grinned, and artfully changed the subject: "Talk of a Battle of Flowers, this is a real war."

"Oh, it's lovely!" Winnie clapped her hands. "I think you're a genius."

Behind the flower shop was an unloading office, and beside this was a small room full of boxes, with a shower bathroom in one corner. This discovery made Winnie jubilant.

"I might as well give up my room and live here. I could save a lot of money."

Dier cast a speculative eye over the possibilities.

"You'd need some furniture."

"Only a day bed and chairs and things."

Customers interrupted them—two girls enthusiastic over the dolls. When they had gone, after buying snapdragon and marguerites, Winnie remembered that neither she nor Dier had had luncheon.

"You go first," she said, "and I'll mind shop."

But he wouldn't hear of this. "There's a restaurant upstairs that looks all right. You might try it."

In the end this was what she did, but as quickly as possible she hurried back to relieve Dier.

FIRST she noticed a large maroon car parked by the curb. Simultaneously she heard shouts and cries coming from inside. Puzzled, she opened the door of the Arcady. Then she gasped in amazement.

Her tidy little shop was invaded by a gang of ruffians. Young ruffians. Very fashionable young ruffians.

One of them—male—squatted on a counter, a girl's hat on his head, a bunch of orchids in his hand, reciting a thing that sounded like: "Mother, braid my hair with May flowers." Another lay on the long wicker bench, a peaceful smile on his lips, while a girl tastefully arranged a lily in his hand, and some on his chest.

A second girl had cut several yards of mosquito netting off a bolt. With this draped in bridal fashion over her head, two dozen roses in one arm, and a protesting youth clutched with the other, she was attempting a wedding march.

The excited, protesting youth was Dier Sweeting. Above the noise Winnie could hear him pleading: "For Pete's sake, get out of here, you Indians. She'll be back any minute, and what'll she say to all this racket?"

Then they saw her—the ruffians. The girls came up in the friendliest possible way—she of the wedding veil and she who was laying out the boy with the peaceful smile—the first pretty and dainty and blond, the second an auburn brunette.

"Oh, do forgive us, Miss Masters, I suppose we *are* acting like Indians, but after all, do you think it's your chore boy's place to talk to us that way? Surely he should show your customers some respect."

"Why, he even ordered us off the premises!"

Winnie felt weak. He who had been coaxing his mother to braid his hair with May flowers joined the group and was almost instantly followed by him of the lily. The frank admiration in the eyes of the two young men still further daunted Winnie. After all, they were rich, and they were probably good customers.

"Oh, I—I don't think you should have done that, Dier," she told her scarlet cheeked assistant. "I'm sure they didn't mean a thing."

"No ma'am," said Dier. "I shouldn't have done it. I was sort of afraid they might hurt the flowers, pulling them out of water and all that. But the two fel—the two gentlemen said they'd buy everything the ladies touched—a dozen lilies, two dozen roses, and a dozen orchids, ma'am."

"Well—I never," said some one to a chorus of choking and sneezing.

Winnie, recovering, beamed. "Why, that's splendid, Dier."

"Who?" asked the blonde.

Winnie didn't quite understand.

"I mean—what did you call your assistant?"

But Winnie, blushing, changed the subject. "I've just taken the shop over to-day. Did you like the window dressing?"

"Yes," said the auburn brunette. "That's how we happened to come in. All those cute dolls."

"Where do you get your ideas?" asked the tallest and handsomest of the men.

Winnie was dreadfully put out about that name—Dier. She decided sud-

denly that never again would she call her delivery boy by anything but his last name.

"Oh, do you really think they're good? I'm so glad," she stumbled along. "Of course I didn't do the window all alone. I had help from—from—" She turned to ask Dier to show the visitors how he had made the fountain, but he seemed to have disappeared; so she finished lamely: "I had help from Sweeting—that is, my assistant."

Then seeing the expressions on the four faces, she could have died.

"Sweeting!" said the little blond girl. "What delightful pet names you have for him! Dear and Sweeting—I think they're just too precious."

"Did any one ever tell you how beautiful you are?"

"Those are his real names," said Winnie with wounded dignity. "He's a nephew of the man who used to run this place."

"Oh—oh—" Four separate sounds. All very much alike.

"You don't mean it!"

"Gee—think of that!"

Winnie showed them the fountain herself and asked if she should send the flowers they had ordered.

No. The girls, smiling brightly at the men, said they would take them along in the car. The plump man paid her for the orchids. The other, the handsome dark one, smiled down at her in a way that was subtly embarrassing—such an admiring, personal way.

"You can charge the lilies and roses to my account," he told her. "I think you'll find my name on the shop's books—Gerry Delorme."

Winnie was startled beyond words. For a minute, thinking, speculating, she hardly heard the girls chattering. Gerry touched her arm.

"And while we're about it," he said, "you might give me a dozen gardenias—same charge."

She worked quickly, boxing the flowers for them. The other three went out to the car, tossing back light messages. "My love to Dear." "Kisses to Sweety." Gerry stayed behind.

"Don't mind them," he said. "They're all right below the eyes. And they can't help what's wrong above."

He was standing very close, as she tied a box with unaccustomed fingers. So close that his arm touched hers. Suddenly he asked in a very low voice:

"Did any one ever tell you how extraordinarily pretty you are?"

She tried to laugh, her cheeks hot. "No, no one ever did. And even if they had, isn't it lucky I don't believe all I hear?"

"Well," said Gerry, "of course I've heard of people who believe the world's flat till they go for a sail round it. You must be like them—sort of incredulous."

She was boxing the gardenias. Suddenly he laid a hand on her two busy ones. With his other he picked out the biggest and loveliest bloom and fastened it on her shoulder.

"Oh, you mustn't do that. You really mustn't!"

"But, my dear, it's already done—a thing of the past. And you must know that these days no one makes a fuss about one's past."

Laughing he took all the boxes from her and sauntered to the door. Here he turned and—

"See you later," he promised lightly.

NO one came into the shop for some minutes, and Winnie was alone with her thoughts.

Only two days ago she had got word that Amalgamated Zinc had failed—the stock she had bought in such high hopes of doubling her money in a week. All of the small fortune her daddy had left her was gone. Heartbroken she had wandered up a country road to cry her heart out under a friendly apple tree. And there—height of miracles—she had been discovered by old Mr. Gerald Delorme, on whose property she had unconsciously trespassed.

Of course he had asked what her trouble was. Wretchedly she had told him about the stock—about the flower shop now, alas, lost forever. And she had nearly fainted when the soft-hearted old gentleman had offered to lend her the amount she needed.

It seemed like a fairy tale that his son—no, it must be his grandson—should have come to the Arcady in this informal way. She was still thinking about it when Dier got back.

"I do hope you've had your luncheon," she said.

"Yes, thanks. Did those Aztecs—I mean those ladies and gentlemen pay for the stock they threw around?"

"Oh, yes, they were very generous

about it, and Mr. Delorme bought a dozen gardenias besides. He's continuing his charge account here."

"What's that?"

But the little doorbell tinkled, and they were interrupted by more customers coming in. Instantly Winnie donned her bright encouraging business smile.

Later the new "used" delivery van arrived, and Dier delivered a lot of orders. The afternoon sped on wings —happy rainbow wings—and at last it was closing time.

Dier had three more orders to deliver. He asked Winnie if she would like to go with him, and then he would drive her home.

Winnie was startled. It seemed rather cheeky of Dier. And yet he looked so friendly and boyish, towering there above her, with his good-looking head brushed so smooth! Besides, she had something to say—something rather important.

"Very well," she agreed with a touch of dignity, "you may take me home."

His mouth drooped a little. "I thought maybe we could go somewhere and—and have—" But in face of her swift coolness he hadn't quite the courage to finish what he had started. "And—and then drive home again," he finished lamely.

"That's what I understood the first time," said Winnie.

They locked up and together crossed to the curb. At the same moment another car—maroon in color—slid in behind them. Winnie didn't see who was driving it, but it seemed to her that Dier swung her into the flivver with great speed and despatch.

"Look here, Miss Winnie, I want you to come with me," said a voice beside her.

It was Gerry Delorme.

"I want to take you to dinner," he explained. "We can go—"

But before he could finish, that saucy boy, Dier, spoke up.

"Sorry, sir," said Dier, "but the lady is on her way."

Really it seemed that the spirit of that old flivver was with him. It was also the spirit of St. Vitus, for that's how it shot out from the curb.

"Dier," said Winnie hotly, "how dare you act that way?"

He looked at her from between his profuse lashes, plaintively astonished. "I thought I was helping you out, ma'am. I didn't suppose you'd want to go with that guy."

Said Winnie haughtily: "Such things are for me to decide. And while we are on the subject"—as it happened, they weren't—"I should like to say that I want you to change your name."

"Change my name?"

"Yes, to Bob—or Jim—or something like that. I don't intend to call you D— I mean, after this I shall call you Bob."

Five minutes straight silence. Dier delivered an order. On returning to the car he said: "Sorry, but I don't like the name of Bob."

Winnie suggested Tom.

He didn't like Tom.

Jim.

Sorry, ma'am, he couldn't stand Jim.

Winnie decided to fire her help. She was really put out. But glancing sidewise she noticed anew what a handsome face he had. She couldn't quite bear to do it now. In the morning—when she wasn't so tired.

DIER began to point out places of interest. He took her for quite a long drive before he finally dropped her at the tea room she men-

tioned. Her last glimpse of him was two wistful brown eyes following her through the doorway.

"The crust of him," said Winnie to herself. "Did he think I'd have dinner with him? I'll certainly have to discharge him in the morning."

But when she reached the Arcady next morning she did not fire Dier Sweeting. Nor did she say anything further about changing his name. Instead she said:

"Mercy—am I seeing things?"

And Dier, grinning like a schoolboy, watched her increasing wonder as she examined the little storeroom.

Some one must have rubbed the genie's lamp, for not only had the storeroom been cleared of all rubbish and cleaned till it shone, but there was furniture in it—a pretty, painted day bed—a gay screen before a chiffonier—a table, easy chairs, and bookcase—cushions and curtains of rose and Nile green. A soft rug and low lamps. A painted vanity table in the bathroom.

"Dier—did you do this?" cried Winnie, overcome.

"Uncle Sweeting," said Dier glibly. "You see, he couldn't take all this stuff West with him. When I told him that you wanted to live here he said he'd be glad to store the stuff."

"But who cleaned the room and hung the curtains and—and put in that switch for the lamp?"

"Well—the girls helped, and I'm quite good myself at electrical fixtures."

"You're wonderful. I could believe an interior decorator did it."

In her joy she could have kissed him. Handsome, beaming big-boy face! Fire him? Just imagine having thought of such a thing. Change his name? Never.

"Dier, you're a perfect dear," she told him, to make it more emphatic. Later she realized that many others knew his name. That morning the crowds began to arrive—carloads of pretty girls with an occasional cynical youth. They all called Winnie's delivery boy by the most astonishing terms—besides Dear and Sweety. "Gimme some roses, Darlink." "Preshum, reach me down a grea' beeg bunch of sweet peas." "Where's Honey? I want him to make me a cuddle corsage."

Winnie rather resented the fun. It wasn't at all her idea of a sober place of business. But at least it *was* business. She was staggered by the amount of money they were taking in. And, she prided herself, all because of the dolls!

At noon she glanced from the window and saw the maroon car slip up. From it stepped Derma Lloyd, the little blond girl who yesterday had tried to lead Dier in a wedding march, and who had been slightly less friendly after she had heard Winnie's names for him. But now Derma was friendly enough. She leaned confidentially toward Winnie and said:

"There's Gerry Delorme in the car waiting to take you to lunch. If you don't mind my saying so, he's got an awful case on you. Do go out to him."

Winnie was secretly thrilled. "But all these people—what will poor Dier do?"

Derma nodded efficiently. "Don't you worry. I'll help the poor lamb."

Somehow she hurried Winnie so that the latter changed into her street suit, scrubbed her hands — rather grubby from handling flowers—powdered her inconsequential nose, and went to the door.

Here she turned. There were at least six débutantish persons in the shop. To

a casual observer it would seem that Dier was dodging all of them. But suddenly Derma took command. "Look here, you sweet girl hyenas," she said, "the owner of this place has left me in charge. So if you've finished your shopping you can all go home and stop blocking traffic."

"Says you!" came an indignant chorus.

"Says me!" from Derma.

Winnie was conscious of an inexplicable feeling. All at once she didn't want to go with Gerry Delorme. What right had any one to turn her out of her own shop, to stand up there beside her assistant and give orders? A hot sharp something she didn't quite understand stabbed through to her heart.

YET ten minutes later, seated with Gerry at one of the most fashionable hotels in town, she relaxed. After all, it was wonderful to have food and service like this—and a smart young cavalier sitting across the table from one.

He was very sweet and attentive, and appeared to consider her wishes the most important things on earth.

"It was marvelous of you to come out with me like this," he said. "I had it all planned that you'd have dinner with me and dance somewhere last night—and then you ran off with that fellow!"

"You're wrong," said Winnie, annoyed. "That fellow, as you call him, delivers orders for me. I was—er—merely delivering some with him last night."

"I see," said Gerry slowly. Then: "Well, what about dining with me to-night?"

"But why have *all* my meals with you?" This with a shade of coquetry.

"Would you like to know why?"

She shook her head. "I don't suppose it matters."

"Oh, but it does—to me. It matters a lot. Do you know, I couldn't sleep last night thinking of a certain little face lovelier than any of the flowers in the Arcady Flower Shop."

"Mr. Delorme, is this your regular line? It sounds practiced."

"Please don't call me Mr. Delorme. Let me be your friend. And mayn't I call for you to-night?"

"Oh, no, really—that would be too much. I simply couldn't."

"That's fine. I'll be round at seven thirty."

"I wonder if you heard what I said, Mr.—er—Gerry?"

"Perfectly. You said you would adore to dine with me to-night."

When Winnie got back to the Arcady she found Dier diligently sweeping up a lot of crumbs. He looked very cross.

"Oh, have you had your lunch?" she asked.

"Yes, thanks. Sandwiches."

She had a scandalized mental picture of that Derma person on one of the counters, swinging impertinent legs and unpacking a lunch basket for two. Well—at least that amazing young society woman wasn't above eating with the Arcady chore boy!

"That girl had no right to come in here and practically order me out of my place of business!" she raged.

"Just what I told her!" said Dier. "Why did you let her get away with it?"

A customer came in in time to save Winnie's last vestige of dignity.

AN exciting week followed. Winnie moved into her new quarters at the Arcady; and Dier took a room with the restaurant keeper up-

stairs—his Uncle Sweeting and family having, as he explained, left for the West. He had an electric connection run from Winnie's rooms below so that if anything frightened her in the night she could ring for help. He was the most thoughtful person in the world!

Winnie found it impossible to keep up the distinctions she had at first drawn. Sometimes she had luncheon with him in her sitting room, each taking turns to answer the bell.

Gradually it was borne in upon her that her assistant exercised a certain fascination over the girls of Marchtown. Even the very fashionable, exclusive set could hardly resist him. It amused Winnie, and she teased him a little about it. He would get all fussed and pink.

"Yeah—says you. Yet there's one girl, if you'll notice, who couldn't see me if I were all splashed with scarlet."

But he wouldn't tell who it was. Winnie told herself gleefully that it certainly couldn't be Derma Lloyd. Yet she never again let Derma take charge of her shop.

During this same week Winnie had dinner with Gerry Delorme nearly every night. Sometimes in town, more often out in the country at wayside inns and places where they could dance. Gerry had a case—oh, an awful case—on the pretty little nobody who had bought the Arcady.

At first it was just fun—for Winnie loved life and beauty and the things that money can buy. Then one night she got a great shock when out of a clear sky Gerry proposed.

They were driving home through starlight along the lake shore, against a soft wind sweet with pine, when he slipped his arm round Winnie and drew her close.

"Don't pull away—don't stop me," he said. "You know the way I am about you, don't you?"

"Silly!" she struggled. "Gerry, I told you I wouldn't pet—and I mean it."

"I know, dear—and I'm not petting. I'm asking you to marry me."

For several seconds Winnie forgot to breathe. Then she gasped:

"You want to—*marry* me?"

He did. He really meant it. Winnie grew dizzy. Money—position—beautiful clothes—everything that a worldly little girl loves, was in the cup of her hand. It was rather curious that such a simple manner of gaining wealth had never seriously occurred to her. Always it had seemed that to get money one must work hard and earn it. Marriage, to Winnie's vigorous young thought, was something in the dim, beautiful future. Certainly up till now none of the men she had met could provide her with what she felt capable of earning herself.

Now a lamp shone in her eyes, dazzling her. Why—she would be a fool not to marry Gerry Delorme!

But his grandfather . . . Would he think she had played him false—borrowing his money and then stealing into his family? Oh, dear—that would never do! She grabbed Gerry's arm and pushed it away.

"But you must love me, Winnie—I won't take no. See, dear—I'm not bribing you, but I'm a rich man. I could give you all the things a pretty girl loves—I could take care of you—"

"Gerry, you mustn't ask me now. Wait till to-morrow night."

Again he caught her to him—kissed her long and yearningly on the lips. Winnie struggled free, dashed her hand across her mouth. And no matter how he coaxed she would not give in—nor would she tell him why. Still plead-

ing with her, he brought her home at midnight.

There, above the Arcady, from the open window of the darkened restaurant, Winnie could see the faint glow of a cigarette. Always it was there when Gerry brought her home . . . as though some one waited up to see that she was safely in.

AT noon next day, over their sandwiches and iced coffee, Dier asked Winnie if she would have dinner with him that night. He asked it, not as a slave suing a favor from his queen, but as a young man conferring an invitation on a girl. Any young man. Any girl.

"Perhaps I will," said Winnie with downcast eyes. "But I rather think — I've promised some one else . . ."

"Same one?"

"I don't understand."

"Sorry," said Dier, and commenced to gather up the luncheon things.

When he had reached the door, Winnie sprang to her feet. Two steps she took after him, her lips forming his name. Then she dropped her hands with a bewildered little gesture and turned back for the rest of the dishes.

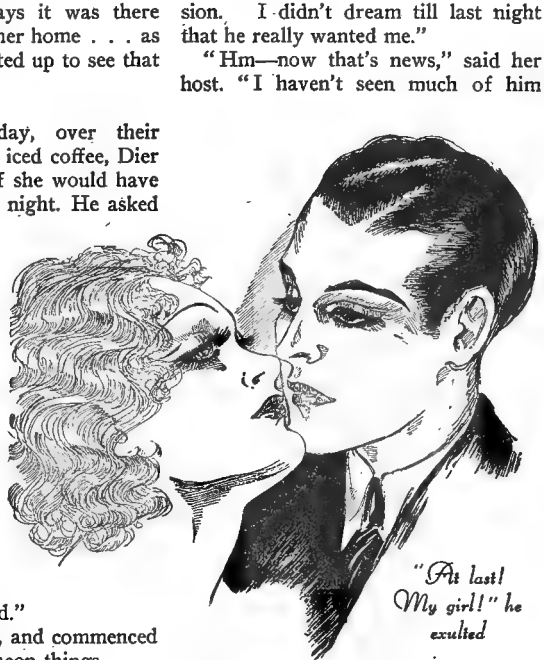
That afternoon old Mr. Delorme was delighted to see Winnie in his library at The Heights—the estate on which she had luckily trespassed.

"I've been going to visit your flower shop, my dear," said he, "but the gout's kept me a prisoner. How's tricks?"

When they had talked for ten minutes, she quietly told him why she had come, concluding:

"I couldn't marry your grandson, Mr. Delorme, without your permission. I didn't dream till last night that he really wanted me."

"Hm—now that's news," said her host. "I haven't seen much of him lately. Who'd have thought the scamp would have such sense!"



"At last! My girl!" he exulted

She was amazed. "You mean—you don't object to me?"

"On the contrary, I admire you tremendously. But Gerry and his harness mate, Ned Hayward, always had a fancy for girls I haven't much use for. Flappers. That sort. Derma Lloyd."

"Oh," from Winnie, "he used to like her, did he?"

"Yes, and I was against it. Gerry's a good fellow when he's alone. And so's

New Hayward. But when they get teaming together there's the devil to pay. What one doesn't think of, the other does."

"Ned Hayward—I don't think I've ever seen him," said Winnie.

"That's odd," from old Mr. Delorme, "for you must have got to know Gerry pretty well—and where one is the other's not such a long way off."

That night Winnie told Gerry she would marry him—if he would take her on one condition.

"Darling," he said, "don't keep me waiting. What is it?"

"It's just this, Gerry. I—I'm not sure that I love you for yourself—for your very own self."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, perhaps—perhaps I'm just dazzled. I couldn't tell if I loved you unless you hadn't any money—or anything. You see, Gerry, I'm afraid I'm worldly."

He hugged her. "You're sweet, Winnie—and awfully honest. What's your condition?"

"That you won't ask me to be—too affectionate just at first."

"Hm—that's tough. For I need your affection, as you call it, the way a tree needs roots. Can't I even kiss you?"

"Oh, yes—but not too long—or too much."

So he contented himself with three or four short ones on the way home. And Winnie told herself she would soon get used to them.

"Gerry," she asked, just before they reached the shop, "where's your friend, Ned Hayward?"

She thought for a minute he hadn't heard, then:

"Who's been talking about him?"

"Oh, one hears things. I wondered if he were out of town."

"Not just at present, darling. You'll have to meet him sometime. To-morrow, perhaps."

There above them in the darkened restaurant glowed the red coal of a cigarette. Gerry slipped his arm around Winnie.

"I think maybe I'd better tell you something—right now—"

"No," she pushed him away, her eyes on that red coal above. "I'm frightfully tired, Gerry. Tell me to-morrow."

He came with her to the door.

"Give me the key, dear, and I'll go through the place."

"No, no, I'm not a bit afraid, Gerry. Good night."

When he had gone she worked with the key in the lock—made quite a rattling noise.

The door beside her—the one leading up to the restaurant—opened.

"Maybe I help you?" asked Dier Sweeting with a certain chilled formality.

"I—I can't get it to turn," Winnie complained, "and I'm—nervous about going in alone. Last night I—I thought I heard a sound."

"You should have called me."

He opened the door—without any trouble. They went together through the flower shop to the dark hall beyond, Winnie keeping so close that her shoulder touched her companion's elbow. In the hall they felt for the switch.

"I should have brought a flash—or matches," said Dier.

Their hands, feeling along the wall, touched. Winnie started violently, but she did not move her hand. Dier's closed upon it—convulsively. There was a long throbbing silence. Then:

"Winnie!"

"Yes, Dier . . ."

She could feel his breath, warm on her cheek.

"Oh, Winnie," said he in a low voice with the hint of a wail in it, "I love you . . ."

She was in his arms, imprisoned in the sweetest warmth she had ever known—Dier's kisses like sparks of fire dropping madly on her hair and face and throat.

"Darling — darling — darling!" he raved deliriously.

In the dark the soft flower of her mouth was upturned, expectant, breathless. Dier's lips found it in a kiss that burned all thought and time. And now —Winnie did not complain or draw away.

At last: "My girl!" he exulted. "Mine—*mine* . . ." Fresh cascades of kisses on hands and cheeks and lips. "My very own girl . . ."

"Dear"—that was the way she spelled it now—"I love you too—but you must go. I'm wicked. I shouldn't have let you—"

But he was a young tornado, not to be denied. It wasn't till she actually burst into tears that he released her.

"Winnie—why—?"

"To-morrow," she gasped, "I'll tell you why. I can't—stand anything more —to-night. You must leave me—Dear."

THROUGH most of the night she wept. Heartbroken. Desolate. She adored him—yet she could never give up all that money. If only Gerry could have been Dier! But he wasn't. She wanted love—but, even more, she wanted riches. And it seemed to her now that the two things never joined hands. For love walks free, without possessions. It pipes to its mate as clearly from the thicket as from the orchard tree.

Pale-faced, resolute, next morning Winnie dabbed her cheeks with rouge.

"I will not ruin my life for Dier Sweeting or any other man. The poor impractical lamb, he'll never have two cents to rub together."

Yet it was hard to tell him so when, like a young conqueror, he stepped high-hearted about the shop, shooting at her guarded glances loaded with a lover's full vocabulary.

In the end it was Gerry who precipitated their interview. At eleven, while Dier unloaded orders from the nursery, Gerry blew in to see his fiancée, and slipped an enormous diamond on her slim finger.

"Like it, sweet?"

"Oh," she gasped, lost in its many gleaming facets, "it's wonderful!"

He laughed and kissed her triumphantly. "You're going to have lunch with me to-day—I have a lot to tell you. Can you come now, and we'll take a drive first?"

"Mercy, no—not for an hour. I've got the window decoration to change."

"All right—I'll be back in three-quarters of an hour."

Winnie flew about her work. The dolls were to be a bridal party to-day. She got a church nave setting with vases of green, and she was struggling to place bride and bridegroom, flower girl, pages for the tulle train, and eight dainty bridesmaids when Dier, having stacked his morning orders in the delivery Ford, joined her to help, his lips audaciously puckered to the Wedding March, his eyes full of glad deviltry.

And then he saw the engagement ring.

"What does it mean?" he asked, white as paper.

"I—I should have told you last night," said Winnie wretchedly. "I— I'm engaged to Gerry Delorme."

"Oh, no, you're not."

"But I am."

He stared down at her, his eyes black and dangerous.

"Loving him better than me?"

"Oh, Dier, don't be so cruel. All my life I've longed for money—and beauty—and ease—and, yes, I'll confess it—social position. Now by a miracle I can have it. I'm not cheating Gerry. He knows I don't really love him. Please—please, Dier, don't look at me like that."

She couldn't endure the quick pain, the veiled contempt in his eyes. It crucified her. She took refuge in anger.

"What right have you—"

"None, except that I love you, and you love me. You have this flower shop, Winnie—I'm strong and I can work to make it pay. Won't you take life in a big gamble?"

She was tortured, but she was stubborn. "I can't."

His face hardened. All the boyishness, the sweetness vanished like a mask. Here was a man who could take and give punishment. Here was a man as stubborn as a mule. As stubborn as Winnie.

"All right then—I'll be going," he said. "I'll deliver these orders and send some one back with the car."

Right there, without a second glance at her, he turned and left.

Perhaps in his young folly he thought she would call him back. But she didn't. Not a sound from her. Angry, defeated, hurt to the point of physical suffering, he strode through the flower shop and up to his room behind the restaurant.

In five minutes he had thrown his meager belongings into a club bag. In another five minutes he had paid his bill to a regretful landlord, and shaken off the dust of the place. Back on the street he climbed into the flivver and started the engine.

A LONG suave car of foreign make, maroon colored, slid in before him. In it were Derma Lloyd and the man Winnie had promised to marry.

"Hi, there, dear—Sweety," called the irrepressible Derma. "I've brought sandwiches. So turn back."

But Dier pretended he didn't hear. With all the noise he could make, he shot off through a tangle of streets to the outskirts of the town. Here at one of the more imposing estates he passed a small lodge and drove up through clumps of rhododendrons to the front door of the big house.

"Well, well, sir," said an old gentleman in the act of descending the steps with two walking sticks. "So I hear she's given you the gate."

"What, sir?" from Dier.

"Isn't that what the young folks call it? The gate?"

"It is, sir. But for the life of me I don't see how you read minds. I just came in to see if Barton could deliver this load of orders for me. I've had a job of delivery man for the Arcady Flower Shop—"

"Hm. I heard some gossip to that effect," said the old gentleman. "And yesterday I heard that you were going to marry the proprietress of the flower place. But not more than a few minutes ago I heard she'd changed her mind and wouldn't have you."

The boy at the wheel was staring, goggle-eyed. "Who in heck told you?"

"She did herself."

"But—do you know her?"

"I have that honor."

"You mean," dazedly, "she told you she was throwing me over for Ned?"

"No, I don't recall that she men-

tioned Ned's name. She seemed excited when she telephoned, and I gathered that she spoke somewhat sentimentally of marrying her dear sweetheart—"

"Her dear sweetheart!" said Dier, also excited. "I wonder if she really said Dier Sweeting—that's the name I've been living under."

"Indeed!" said the older man. "I always suspected you were a fool. But if you willingly called yourself a sickening name like that—why should she tell me yesterday that she was going to marry my grandson, Gerry Delorme?"

"Oh, she meant Ned Hayward. He's been living under my name."

"Somewhat confusing. May I ask why Ned took your name?"

"Because, in the beginning, of his confounded sense of humor. While I was working in the shop—incog, as it were—I made him pay for a bunch of flowers he and some girls mussed up, so to get even with me he gave my name for his charge account. That's how it started. But," in bitter tones. "if she just this minute called you to say she was going to marry Dier Sweeting, that means Ned has told her the truth, and she knows now I'm Gerry Delorme—"

BEFORE he got any further there was a commotion in the rear of the flivver. A lady, somewhat disheveled, but young and very charming, as well as amazed and pink with anger, sprang into view.

"Don't you dare to say such a thing," stormed Winnie Masters. "I've been back here, hiding in the flivver, ever since I telephoned Mr. Delorme. I—I decided that I'd marry you—after all. But now that I know who you are I wouldn't have you if you dragged me off by the hair of the head."

The real Gerry Delorme—alias Dier Sweeting—was too dazed to reason what to do. But his instincts were hitting on all cylinders, so that, after all, he did the best thing possible. He grabbed Winnie Masters and lifted her bodily from the flower van into the seat next his own.

"Why, you couldn't have seen Ned," he babbled joyously. "He and Derma didn't drive up to the shop till I was leaving—and you were with me. Winnie, do you really, really mean you love me—*me*, just as I am—without granddad or any of the trappings or money?"

"N-no," she sobbed, "I hate you. I wouldn't marry you if—"

Gerry—Dier—threw in the clutch, waved largely to his interested grandparent, and drove away. When they reached a quiet spot he stopped the car and took Winnie forcibly to his heart.

"Beautiful," he told her, "I knew I was going to love you the minute you entered Sweeting's shop. That was why I called myself Dier, partly in fun and partly so you'd sound affectionate toward me even from the start. Then that wild bunch barged in and found me—and though they kept my secret, they made all the trouble they could. And presently Ned really fell for you. Winnie, I thought I'd die to-day when you said you were going to marry him—"

"I—I left his ring on the counter—in an envelope addressed to him," came Winnie's muffled tones.

"You darling! Poor Ned—he'll just have to get over it. Winnie, say in words of one syllable that you love me—and will marry me . . ."

She said it—in words of one syllable—and he kissed her between each word.

"Rest your head on my shoulder," he commanded. Diana felt herself unable to resist

Glad Rags

Men called her a party girl. Was no man to see into her heart?

By Edward C. Davies

THE whir of a victrola beating out the latest hot number. The bubble of laughter and gayety. Two or three couples dancing round the studio floor, and in the center of it, maddest of them all, Diana Chase, doing a solo Charleston, while her heart was breaking.

Her piquant little made-up face was aquiver with laughter and challenge. Her brilliant eyes sparkled with merriment. Her crimson, pouting lips were drawn to an arc of deliberate, mocking seduction. The other dancers drew apart, laughing, and grouped in a circle to watch "Mad Diana" dance. When she finished in a pirouette that would have done justice to a professional, a wild outburst of applause beat around her.

"Glad-rag Doll," called Gilbert Hunter, owner of the studio, from the sideboard, where he was mixing drinks. He meant the remark jokingly, but a spasm of pain swept through Diana's heart. She veiled it swiftly, and laughed mockingly.

"Change the record," she called. "That one's finished, Gil."

She threw herself, exhausted, on to a low divan, and waved away a young boy who offered her a drink. She was tired; more tired in spirit than in body. She wanted—perhaps for the first time in her young life—to rest.

The others resumed their dancing. For a moment they had forgotten her. Diana watched them; and the laughter died out of her face, leaving it white and strained.

Glad-rag Doll! Was that really what she was? All her life gayety had come naturally to her. She had thrown herself life and soul into every party to which she was invited, had become the acknowledged leader of her set. She had more men round her than she knew what to do with. Flirtations had come her way as easily as falling leaves in autumn.

Yet she had always known when to stop.

Claire Athol was dancing now with Denny Rolf. Her blue eyes were looking into his dark ones. Her slim hand was gently caressing his collar while they danced. On her left hand she wore his engagement ring; the one he had given her only this very afternoon.

Denny Rolf and Claire Athol! For a brief instant Diana closed her eyes. What was the use of life? What was the use of anything, when the one thing you wanted with all your heart passed you by?

All her girl friends seemed to get engaged sooner or later. Only she—who had more men round than any of them—never had that finger circled. Every evening she had an engagement of some sort—either dance, theater, or drive. She never had an empty hour. Other girls envied her. But other girls got engaged. Till recently she had not cared. But now—

Again she looked at them. Again that spasm of pain caught at her.

She had known Denny for months. He had taken her out repeatedly. He danced divinely and—well, he had as much as admitted that he cared for her—would always care. Then had come the gradual lessening of the number of days they met, and to-day the announcement of his engagement to Claire; Claire of the demure eyes; Claire whose flirtations might be less in number than her own, but which were certainly not less in intensity.

A fierce anger surged in Diana's heart. Glad-rag Doll because she wore lovely clothes, and threw herself wholeheartedly into whatever amusement offered! She did at least know where to stop; Claire didn't.

DIANA sprang to her feet, laughter bubbling from her crimson lips. They should never see she was hurt, anyhow. She raised both arms.

"Let's go for a moonlight picnic in the cars. It's a lovely night. I'm stifling here. Gilbert can pack some stuff to eat and something to drink, he's got tons of it in the kitchen. Anybody on?"

Gilbert Hunter caught her hand.

"Great idea!" he applauded. "My housekeeper will pack some baskets. Come along with me and we'll ask her."

Three of the men had cars. It was a tight squeeze, but all managed to get

in. Diana found herself with Gilbert Hunter. With them were Denny and Claire and two others. Some one had brought a ukulele, and was strumming it madly while the others sang.

"I Ain't Nobody's Baby! I Ain't Nobody's Baby!"

Diana felt like plugging her fingers into her ears. That song of all others, too! She had thought that, out in the open, she would be able to get away from the noise.

"Tired?" said Gilbert Hunter's low voice close to her ear.

"A bit," she acknowledged.

"Small wonder," he continued, "since you play all night and work all day. I don't know how you do it."

She laughed.

"What about you?"

"I?" He echoed her laugh. "I only pretend to."

Despite herself, Diana found herself looking back into the tonneau. Denny had Claire on his knee. Well—they were engaged. Why not?

A spasm of jealousy tore at her, but she ruthlessly quashed it. Jealousy was "littleness." Whatever else she might be, she was no whiner. Claire had won him, and that was all there was to it.

She would have to forget the way his hair curled over his forehead in crispy waves she had loved to run her fingers through. She would have to forget his narrowed, blue-gray eyes—the way he smiled—that twist to the corner of his mouth whenever he spoke. She would have to forget.

But why? Why? Was Gilbert right? Did they think she was just a Glad-rag Doll—"to play with, but not to grow old and gray with"—wasn't that how the song went?

Was that why Denny had not asked her to marry him? Men admitted two sorts of girls—the girls they took out and the girls they married. Did Denny think Claire was one of the sort men marry?

THE night was perfect, with a clear sky and a brilliant moon almost at the full. Gilbert's car was faster than the others, and he outdistanced them. They had the road to themselves. The ukulele was silent now.

Diana glanced over her shoulder. Everything was very quiet in the tonneau. She felt Gilbert's arm slide round her shoulders. Well, what did it matter? Gilbert was a decent sort. She allowed him to draw her closer to him, while he drove with one hand. But her mind was not on what he was saying.

What a horrible muddle life was! Denny was engaged to Claire. And she—"Mad Diana"—would have to go lonely all her days, for she was the one man type of girl. It was Denny or no one. She had fought for him, and lost—lost to a girl like Claire Athol. What did anything matter now?

The other cars were nowhere in sight when they arrived at their destination—a small clearing right in the heart of the woods. Gilbert drove the car off the roadway on to the grass and stopped it. The strains of the ukulele rose in the quiet air amid bursts of laughter, as they unpacked the provisions. Diana watched Denny and Claire go wandering among the trees until they were lost to sight in the darkness that lay beyond the rays of the car's headlights. The other two were laying a cloth on the sweet smelling grass.

"Cheer up, Diana!" said Gilbert suddenly. She looked up, startled, to find him close beside her. His swarthy face was sympathetic, his teeth show-

ing whitely beneath his clipped, black mustache. "I rather thought you had fallen for young Rolf," he added.

She laughed to hide the pain in her heart.

"Who said I had fallen?"

But she was thinking of Denny Rolf's narrowed eyes; of that twist to his mouth when he talked; of that evening when she had lain in his arms and given him her lips. Perhaps he thought she kissed the other men who took her out. Perhaps he thought *that* kiss had meant nothing to her. How could he know that she had never in her life kissed any man as she had kissed him then?

She shivered, and found Gilbert's arm round her waist. They were walking slowly toward a great, fallen tree-trunk, just beyond the patch of light from the headlamps. Of the others there was nothing to be seen. Probably they had branched off—decided to picnic on their own. It would be just like them.

"I've a little surprise for you," whispered Gilbert softly. "If you'll just wander with me through these trees."

A faint curl of smoke twisting into the moonlight and a small, rustic creeper-covered cottage in a clearing. Gilbert kicked open the door and ushered her into a cozy, softly lighted hallway. She stood, hesitating, on the threshold.

"I own this place," he told her. "I come here sometimes when I want really to work in peace—when the studio gets too hot for me. I have an old housekeeper."

He led her into a book-lined study. She sank luxuriously into a low divan, and looked up.

"What will the others think, Gil? We can't leave them like this."

He laughed.

"They'll be all right. They'll be waiting by the car. I want you to see this place— I want you to come out some afternoon and have tea with me."

Diana laughed.

"I never go to tea in isolated cottages with men," she said.

Then, before she could make a movement to rise, Gilbert Hunter was on his knees at her feet, and his arms were wreathed round her waist, his face buried in her lap. She could feel his hot breath through the thin stuff of her frock.

"Diana, Diana! I'm wild about you! I love you. You must know it! Say you care, Diana—just a little bit. I've tried to get you alone for ages, but you've always seemed somehow to avoid it. You were made for kisses, my dear!"

For an instant Diana did not move. Denny and Gilbert! Gilbert—and Denny! She laughed suddenly, hysterically almost.

"Gil, be sensible!" She tried to rise, but the weight of his body held her down. Then, looking over his shoulders, she saw the door open. She stiffened in every muscle. Her face went bloodless and her teeth bit into her lower lip until the blood came.

Standing in the open doorway was Denny Rolf. His face was set sternly and contemptuously. His mouth was sneering with that twist she loved. His voice rang through the room curtly:

"Sorry to interrupt, but there's a rainstorm brewing, and the others sent me to find you. We ought to be getting back."

He turned abruptly on his heel and went out.

Gilbert Hunter got to his feet rather awkwardly.

"Confound!" he said briefly. Diana laughed. Better laughter than tears.

"You've done it now!" she said. "You've ruined my reputation for good!"

"Rolf won't talk."

"But," she answered, suddenly quiet, "Rolf will *know!*"

She walked to the door, through the hall, and out into the open. The moon showed only flickering glimmers of light through the inky clouds that had drawn over the sky. A light wind had risen. Already a few drops of rain were falling.

Denny would think the worst, of course. Well, things couldn't be any worse than they had been. It did not matter what he thought now. He was engaged That was funny, too. At one time she had thought Claire was going to marry Gilbert. They had been awfully thick.

The other cars had arrived when she reached the clearing. Her arrival was greeted with mocking cheers.

"Come along, David and Jonathan!" cried some one. She laughed in response.

"Be quiet, my children! You'll disturb the midnight slumbers of the little birdies!"

And so back to town, with the ukulele strumming away and the rain beating down on the roof of the car and laying a muddy carpet on the roadway. At Gilbert's studio the party broke up. It was 4 A.M. before Diana crept up the stairs of her own flat and fell, limp and exhausted, into bed.

Her pillow was wet with tears before she found peace in sleep.

A WEEK later, answering the door to a ring late in the evening, Diana found Denny Rolf standing on the step. He was wearing a long raincoat. Rain again! It reminded her of that other night. Instinctively, as she saw him standing there, her hand went to her heart.

"Is Claire here?" he asked curtly.

"No," she answered him simply. "I haven't seen her for a week."

"Thanks!" said Denny shortly. "All girls, it seems, are alike. She told me she was spending the evening with you. I thought it was a lie, somehow. If she's with that cad Hunter, I'll break his neck!" He turned, swung down the steps, and vanished into the darkness.

Diana, with a sudden agony in her heart, stood motionless. Poor old Denny!

She reached out for the telephone that stood in the hall, hesitated, withdrew her hand. Why should she interfere? It was nothing to her. Yet there was a certain loyalty to one's friends.

She caught her breath. What ought she to do?

If Claire was out with Gilbert, and Denny found them, it would break his heart. His face, while he stood there on her step, had told her that. She reached out again for the phone.

But why interfere? She loved Denny herself. If he broke with Claire he might come back to her!

Her hand was trembling on the instrument. She passed the other over eyes that were misted with tears. What *ought* she to do? It was so difficult to decide; so difficult to know where self-interest stopped and decency stepped in. But surely she ought to save Denny from disillusionment if she could. It would hurt him horribly if he found out the truth.

She lifted the receiver and gave the number of Gilbert Hunter's flat. The line burred and whirred. She almost

crashed the receiver back on the hook. Her mind was in an agony. She was deliberately killing her own chances of getting him back. A voice spoke suddenly. It was Hunter's housekeeper. Mr. Hunter was out. She thought that he was *at his summer cottage!*

Slowly Diana replaced the phone. It had been taken out of her hands now. She could do no more. Fate had decided that she could do the decent thing and still keep her chances of getting Denny back. A rush of relief flooded her.

But she could not forget Denny's grim face. Sudden realization came to her that there was still more she must do. If anything happened—murder, for instance—

Diana flung a coat over her shoulders and crammed a béret on her cropped curls that had not yet grown. She dashed round to the garage where she kept her little two-seater. Denny would go to the studio first. She might get to Gil's cottage in the woods before he did—though his car was a racing model. She *must* get there first!

She drove as she had never driven before. At all costs she must warn them.

She scarcely even noticed the heavy downpour that started before she had covered half the distance. Her small body crouched over the quivering wheel. Her thinly-shod foot had the accelerator pedal pressed down to the footboards. Her small face was white and strained.

She ran the car over the grass to the door of the cottage. There was light in the windows. Some one was playing the piano. She switched off the engine. Evidently the sound of the piano had drowned it. She crept to the window and looked in.

Claire was playing. Gilbert Hunter stood behind her, his arm across her shoulders; his face against her hair.

Somewhere behind the watching girl, on the main road, sounded the high-pitched whine of a racing car engine. She would recognize it anywhere. It was Denny's car.

Three times Diana rapped on the window—then she ran around to the little door. It was opened immediately by Gilbert Hunter, whose face showed white with fear. It was obvious whom he had expected to see. But Diana gave him no time to speak. She dashed into the hallway.

"Quick!" she snapped. "Denny will be here in a moment. If he finds Claire here he'll do something desperate."

Her voice, raised as it was, carried into the study. She heard a cry. Claire came dashing into the hall. Diana took command of the situation.

"My car is outside," she said swiftly. "It will take Denny a few moments yet to come down the lane from the main road. Take my car—go in the opposite direction."

Already the other girl was huddling into her coat. Her blue eyes were terror-stricken. She tried to stammer thanks, but Diana cut them short.

"I'm not thinking of you!" she cried. "I'm thinking of Denny. If he found you here he would kill Gil. I want to save him from doing anything that might get him into trouble. You know his temper. Hurry!"

Claire ran through the open doors. The scream of Denny's racer sounded very near. Its headlights were already showing in an arc of white light above the trees. The engine of Diana's two-seater roared, and the little car shot across the grass like a pellet from a catapult. It zipped into the lane with a roar of flying stones and sand, shot

into the screen of trees and was lost to sight.

Diana turned, suddenly weak.

"What about you?" snapped the artist. "If he finds you here—"

"He will only think it is just like me," she answered. "I'm not—Claire. He isn't in love with *me*."

She turned in through the study door, walked across the carpet and threw herself into an armchair. The emotions of that drive had taxed every atom of her strength. She felt suddenly worn out. She could not have stood if she had tried.

She heard the scream of four-wheel brakes as Denny drew up—and then Denny Rolf's well-remembered voice; stern now and curt as the voice of a judge condemning a prisoner.

Dimly it penetrated her consciousness. But what did it matter? No one would mind if *she* were found alone with Gilbert Hunter. She was just a Glad-rag Doll—they would think it only natural.

Diana closed her eyes. She leaned her head wearily against the cushions. She could still hear Denny's voice, demanding admittance, and Gil's refusing it. There came the sound of a scuffle.

Poor Gil!

The door crashed open. She raised her eyelids and looked up. Denny was standing in the aperture.

"Hello, Denny," she murmured whimsically. "Did you find Claire?"

There was a pause, alive with tension. Then the man's face grew bewildered. The stern set of his jaw softened. A glimmer of contempt crept into his gray eyes. He took his hand out of his raincoat pocket.

"I left you in town," he said uncertainly.

"Now you find me here. Gil picked me up in his car. I was just going out to meet him when you called."

"Why didn't you tell me that when you knew I was going round to see him?"

"Why should I?" she inquired languidly. Her whole pose was one of disinterest, but beneath the mask she was watchful and wary. Denny was not a fool. He could reason as well as most people. Obviously he was suspicious now. Gil appeared in the doorway.

"Now, if you're satisfied, Rolf," he said, with biting sarcasm, "perhaps you'll leave us."

"Jameson told me you had an engagement for to-night," said Denny Rolf slowly. "I thought—it seems that I was wrong. If Miss Chase likes to visit men alone in their week-end cottages it is no business of mine."

Diana flinched, then laughed.

"My dear old boy, please don't be old-fashioned," she responded. "These aren't the Victorian days, you know. It doesn't necessarily follow that because a girl dines alone with a man she loses her reputation."

"No?" said Denny Rolf sarcastically. "Is that so? Sorry to have intruded."

He turned. His coat swished against the door-jamb. The front door slammed, and the engine of his car raced into action. It roared across the grass, skidded into the lane, and gradually faded into the distance.

Diana stood up.

"I think," she murmured wearily, "that I'll get back now. Take my advice, Gil. If you must indulge your liking for feminine society choose some one next time who belongs to a man less dangerous than Denny. He would have half killed you if he had caught Claire here to-night."

Gilbert Hunter paled.

"It was perfectly harmless," he protested. "I've known Claire for ages. She simply came to have a bite of dinner, and—"

"I know," answered Diana. "But remember, Gil, it isn't what a girl *is*, but what she *seems to be*, that counts. Some men would understand, but not men like Denny. He's not the sort to believe that a girl can look after herself, even in these days. You and Claire have been playing with fire. Take my advice and don't. You'll get burned yet."

She moved toward the door. A slow smile parted Gil Hunter's lips. "How are you getting back?" he asked softly.

Diana jumped. "Great Scott!" she exclaimed. "I had forgotten. Claire has taken my car."

"I'll drive you back," offered Hunter slowly. "But—since you've deprived me of a pleasant evening, and dinner is waiting, don't you think you ought to stay and eat it first?"

"I would rather not."

"And I," said Gil Hunter shortly, "flatly refuse to go out in this storm until I've eaten—so you may as well join me."

For a long moment Diana stood perfectly still, her eyes on Gilbert's swarthy face. Then, quite suddenly, she laughed on a note of recklessness that was more than a little bitter.

"You know, Gilbert," she said, "you're an awful rotter, really, where women are concerned, but I don't think you'll put anything over on me. I know you too well. Bring in the food; we may as well celebrate while we're at it, I suppose."

She swirled on her heels, went over to the mirror and began to arrange her hair. Apparently intent upon the task, she yet managed to watch Gilbert Hunter's reflection in the glass. He stood for a second watching her, his face filled with changing expressions. Then he turned and went out through the door. Instantly Diana left the glass. She threw herself into an armchair and pressed the fingers of both hands to her throbbing temples.

If only she could be alone for a little while so that she could let this wave of hopelessness envelop her and fight it out without any one knowing of her misery. Would she never forget?

"Denny! *Denny!*" she whispered.

Gilbert Hunter called her from the dining room.

It was a strange meal. Neither spoke much. Diana was conscious of her companion's eyes covertly on her face; of the intentness of his regard. She knew well enough that he was attracted; that he was meditating ways and means of bringing about her surrender.

She was not worrying. She was capable of handling a dozen Gilbert Hunters, anyhow. But she had made up her mind that never again would she allow herself to be alone with him. To-night she could not help it.

The wind was howling round the walls of the cottage and flinging gusts of rain against the window panes. Dimly she realized that the storm was getting worse. But Hunter's car would easily be able to get through it. She wished the meal were over, even though it was dainty enough, and appetizing—and she was hungry.

The cold viands had evidently been prepared beforehand. She ate gratefully, and felt renewed strength.

At last Gilbert rose. He looked at her for a moment.

"I'll go and bring the car round," he said simply.

Diana nodded.

"You'll find me in an armchair,"

she answered briefly. Hunter vanished. Diana dragged on her coat and hat. Alone now, with no one to see her, she allowed the misery of her heart to show for a moment in her face. Then, with a sound that was half a groan and half a laugh, she turned resolutely and squared her shoulders. It was the luck of the game. She had lost. She would have to prove herself a sport, that was all.

In the hallway she met Gilbert as he came in, dripping with rain.

He gave her a quick, strangely furtive glance from his dark eyes. His swarthy face seemed to have flushed crimson beneath its tan. He was embarrassed, unsure of himself. She had never seen him in this mood before. A swift suspicion struck her, and she stopped, not a pace away from him, looking him straight between the eyes.

"Something wrong with the car, Gilbert?" she asked softly, but in a voice that held infinite contempt.

Gilbert Hunter avoided her gaze. He moved uneasily on his feet.

"I'm awfully sorry, but—well, I forgot to fill up before we started, and—the truth is—that—"

Diana laughed bitterly. "The old story. Out of gas, I suppose. Do you imagine for an instant that that is going to bluff me? You had better find some way of getting me back—and quickly!"

"It is impossible to get through this storm on foot," muttered Gilbert. A gust of wind hurtling through the open door behind him proved the statement only too true.

Fear; terrible, sickening fear was tearing at the roots of Diana's soul. He had trapped her. But she realized clearly enough that she must not let him know she feared him. So long as she treated him with contempt she was safe. Once he realized how weak she really was—

She walked toward the open door. The man followed. His hands fell on her shoulders. She turned.

"Please don't touch me!" she snapped.

The shadow of a smile touched his face. He stepped back mockingly.

"Regular little prude, aren't you, Diana?" he asked.

"Perhaps," she replied coldly. Silence followed—a silence that troubled her; a silence that seemed alive with menace and danger. Gilbert Hunter still held her with his eyes. There was a dark gleam in them that frightened her, but she fought down the fear. She moved toward the armchair, intending to draw it closer to the fire. His hand shot out and caught her wrist.

"Diana!"

His voice was low and thick with emotion. She glanced into his face. She tried to wrench herself free, but he held her.

"Diana, I'm wild about you! Give me a kiss!" He drew her closer to him, until she could feel his breath on her face.

"You cad!" she whispered almost inaudibly. She tried to strike him with her free hand, but he caught it and, twisting both her wrists behind her back, pressed her against him; holding her so that she was powerless to move without giving herself excruciating pain.

His kisses were on her throat and her neck. The contact of his mouth was like a searing flame, sickening her. Fiercely she tried to hold back her head. She managed to free one hand. Once—and once only—she struck him. Then his arms were round her, and she was stifling against his coat. She closed her eyes, and went limp in his

embrace. When she could speak she looked up at him.

"Don't be—so—so rough, Gilbert," she muttered, trying to infuse her voice with a meaning he could not but understand.

The ruse succeeded. He laughed suddenly, imagining, as she had intended him to imagine, that her resistance had been a sham, and that she was now ready to surrender. He released her.

"I knew you weren't as good as all that," he answered. "Sit down by the fire, dear. Heavens, how I love you! Your beauty is enough to send a fellow mad for your kisses."

But that one second of freedom had been all Diana wanted. Now, with a movement so swift that he could not follow it, she darted to the door. It opened beneath her hand. She heard his savage oath behind her. Then she was in the hall. She caught up her coat as she ran, dragged open the front door and darted out into the storm that raged outside. The wind caught at her, almost sweeping her from her feet. A flurry of rain drove into her mouth and eyes, so that she could scarcely see where she was going. Her feet stumbled on the rough track, but she was free! It did not matter where she went so long as she got away from that house.

He announced coldly: "I was sent to find you"

Branches of trees brushed her face, scratching the skin and bruising her. Already she was soaked, but still she ran blindly into the night, struggling to put on her coat as she ran. She thought she heard Hunter shouting behind her, but the wind tore the sound to shreds.

Abruptly her headlong flight came to an end. She ran full-tilt into a tree, and was nearly thrown off her feet by the violence of the impact. She stood, swaying to and fro, half dazed, while the wind tore at her and the water beat into her face. It was impossible to see a yard before her. Her hair was bedraggled and streaming with water.

Quite close to her a voice called her name:

"Diana—Diana!"

Fear awoke once more. She staggered—started again to run. Hands came out of the darkness. A shadowy figure loomed up behind her. Her wrists were caught.

"Diana! Don't be a fool. You can't go through this!" came Gilbert Hunter's voice, panting with the exertion of his run. "For Heaven's sake be sensible. Come back to the cottage. I won't touch you, I swear it!"

Feebly Diana tried to strike him, but a black veil was falling before her eyes. Everything was swimming round her. She made a stifled sound in her throat, clutched out for support, and slid in a dead faint to the ground.

He muttered beneath his breath, swore savagely, and, bending, lifted her into his arms. Turning back, he made his way toward the light that shone from the open doorway of the cottage.

The storm buffeted and tore at him as he went, while the wind shrieked among the trees as though laughing triumphantly at his conquest.

Diana opened her eyes slowly, conscious of a great weakness and a surge of pain in her throbbing head. Gradually, as her eyes became used to the light, she realized that she was back in Gilbert Hunter's cottage; that she was lying on a couch close to the fire. The warmth was subtle and invigorating. A sense of delicious laziness enveloped her.

He had stripped off her sodden dress and shoes, and she was clad only in a slip with heavy motoring rugs thrown over her legs and body. Hanging over a chair to dry were her coat and dress.

She tried to think it all out, but her mind would not function. She was tired—tired of everything; tired of life and the struggle of it all.

She had lost Denny. What did anything else really matter? She closed her eyes and let the feeling of sleepiness sweep over her. It was pleasant to lie here—and warm. The storm—she shivered even as she thought of those terrible moments when she had run blindly through the darkness with Gilbert Hunter at her heels. Where was he now?

The sound of an opening door answered the unspoken question. Gilbert Hunter came to the side of the couch. In one hand he held a bowl of steaming soup. He really *was* a handsome brute. One could not deny that.

She took the bowl and sipped gratefully at the steaming liquid. Hunter knelt beside her.

"I'm sorry, Diana," he muttered.

She did not answer him, and, after a moment, he reached up and caught her hand.

"I love you, dear. I cannot help it. Why did you run away like that?"

She tried to withdraw her hand, but he clung to it. Words of passionate

love came tumbling from his lips. How could she know whether he was sincere or not? Perhaps, for the moment, he really was sincere and thought his passion to be the real thing. Perhaps he did love her, as much as his nature was capable of loving any one.

Diana scarcely heard his words. Her mind was on Denny. She had lost him—lost him forever. After this—staying the night alone with Gilbert Hunter—Denny would think her the worst of women. What did anything matter now? She was tired, exhausted and lonely—horribly lonely.

She felt Gilbert's arm slide round her waist, and allowed him to draw her against him so that her head rested in the hollow of his shoulder. She closed her eyes. It was rather wonderful to be held like this—to be cared for—to hear a man's voice whispering words of love. If only it had been Denny instead of Hunter! What was the use of fighting any longer?

Then quite suddenly Diana's dreaminess seemed to leave her. A shudder ran through her body. What had she been doing? What had she been thinking? She struggled to a sitting position and threw Gilbert's arms away from her.

"Don't touch me, you cad!" she cried—and slid to the floor, clutching the rugs round her insufficiently clothed body. Hunter tried to reach her again.

"Diana, for goodness' sake," he cried, "let me—"

But something snapped in Diana's brain. His upraised hand struck terror to her. Perhaps he only meant it as a gesture of reassurance—that she never knew. But she took it as a movement of menace. He took a stride toward her and, as he did so, her groping hand closed on something heavy on the table behind her. It was a huge porcelain vase. She gripped it—swung it over her head.

"Don't touch me!" she cried again, hysterically now.

Gilbert Hunter took a leaping stride forward.

"Put that down!"

With all the force of her arm, Diana swung the heavy ornament full at Hunter's unprotected head. It struck him above the temple. He swayed on his feet and crashed, without a sound, to the carpet, where he lay very still, one arm flung out, his knees drawn up, his face turned toward the floor. A thin trickle of blood oozed through his hair and ran down his neck.

Diana uttered one terrified scream; then the power of speech left her. She stood riveted to the ground, staring in a terrible fascination at the still form of the man she had stunned or perhaps killed. The vase fell from her nerveless fingers and shattered to pieces at her feet.

It seemed hours that Diana stood there staring down at the motionless figure of Gilbert Hunter. Then, abruptly, life came flooding back to her paralyzed muscles. She edged round the still figure, keeping as far away from the man as she could, got free of the corner in which he had hemmed her and dashed toward the door.

Her trembling fingers fumbled with the knob, but at last she had it open and ran panic-stricken into the hall. She had scarcely taken a dozen steps before the outer door was thrown open from the outside, and a blinding onslaught of rain and wind hurtled into the house.

Denny Rolf closed the door behind him and came slowly into the hallway. For one agonizing second Diana gazed at him in amazement, then, over-

wrought and on the verge of hysteria, she threw herself forward and caught the lapels of his coat with feverish hands.

"Denny!" she cried. "Take me away—*take me away!*"

Denny Rolf made no answer in speech. He reached up and drew her clinging hands from their hold, drawing them down to her sides. He stepped back. His face was hard and contemptuous; his blue-gray eyes narrowed to mere slits of scorn. His voice, when he spoke, was chill like steel and unemotional.

"So you came here to warn Claire," he said quietly. "I might have guessed it. Birds of a feather naturally flock together. You could have spared yourself the trouble. As it happens, I overtook her on my way back. She was jammed. I got the whole truth out of her. All you girls, it seems, are alike. She comes here to dine alone with a man with a reputation like Hunter's. You come to warn her for fear I should find out the truth. Pretty pair, aren't you?"

Dead silence followed his brutal words. Diana, her eyes riveted to his face, forgot the senseless man in the other room, forgot her own predicament, forgot everything as she heard the pain in his voice that he vainly tried to hide. Poor Denny!

"She never was any good," she whispered. "But I did not want you to be disillusioned again."

Denny Rolf laughed.

"*Disillusioned?* Great Scott! That's a new one. Are you trying to make me believe you warned her for *my sake?*" He laughed again. "You warned her because you are of the same kidney, and like naturally sticks to like."

Diana stepped back as though he had struck her. A touch of crimson flashed into her cheeks.

"If you think that," she cried impulsively, "why did you come back?"

"I came back," said Rolf slowly, "because I realized that Claire had your car, and that you were alone here with Hunter. I went on home, then somehow I could not rest. I came back just in case—" His voice faltered into silence. But a great glow of happiness was sweeping Diana. So he cared, after all. He *cared!* He *must* care, to have come through this storm just in case she needed him. And how greatly she *had* needed him he would never know.

"All the way through that storm I hoped against hope that I was wrong in my estimation of you—that there was some explanation. You see, when I broke my engagement with Claire I realized, somehow, that from the beginning it had been a mistake.

"It was you I cared for, Diana. Always had been, though I was blind to it, and Claire's demure ways fascinated me. I couldn't believe that you were—what appearances made you seem. Even when I opened this door I was still hoping. But now—"

He made a gesture of contempt and swung suddenly round on his heel.

"Obviously you do not need me," he added.

Diana was appalled. What did he mean?

She started forward and uttered a small cry of appeal.

"Denny! Denny—what—what do you—mean?"

He stopped with his hand on the door; slowly turned. His face was like granite; his eyes hard and merciless; his mouth curved to a sneer of absolute disgust. He made a gesture toward her.

"Don't you think appearances speak for themselves?" he said grimly.

For the first time since her panic-stricken dash into the hall, Diana remembered and looked down. The rug that had covered her lay in the drawing-room. She was clad only in an underslip that had been disarrayed by her struggle with Hunter. A wave of hot color flooded her cheeks.

"Denny!" she whispered.

For an instant he hesitated, then he shrugged and turned away from her.

"There is only one opinion possible of a girl who dines alone—like that—with a man like Hunter," he said crisply, and reached forward to open the door.

Diana commenced to laugh. It was wild, hysterical laughter; the result of overwrought emotions and nerves. She had just remembered the stunned man in that inner room. The shock of the unexpected meeting with Denny Rolf had made her forget everything but her love for *him*. Now he was going out of her life forever.

She ran after him and drew him away from the door, still laughing harshly.

"I've something to show you!"

She was dragging him now toward the door of that inner room. At first he resisted, then, with a faint shrug, he allowed himself to be led.

Diana threw open the door and pointed inside the room.

"I hit him. I hope he's dead—the beast!" she cried. She burst suddenly into a storm of passionate sobbing. Denny Rolf took one look at Hunter's motionless form, uttered a stifled oath, and leaped into the room. An instant later he looked up from his position on his knees beside the artist.

"Only stunned!" he exclaimed thankfully. He rose. "Diana, you poor child, why didn't you tell me first? If only I had known—"

He took a step toward her, but Diana evaded his grasp. Again she laughed.

"Go away! I hate you! I loathe the sight of you, Denny Rolf. You make love to one girl, become engaged to another, then throw her over, and think you can come back whenever you think fit. Do you imagine I'll ever forgive you for what you said just now? I despise you!"

She would have said more, but tears blinded her eyes and welled up in her throat, choking her. Denny Rolf stood regarding her helplessly. Gilbert Hunter groaned and tried to sit up.

Diana reached for her coat. She looked at Rolf.

"I suppose I'll have to let you drive me home," she muttered. "I ought to thank you for coming through this storm on my account. Or was it, perhaps, that you thought that if Gilbert could succeed you might, too?"

She had gone that far in her bitterness and her agony. Denny Rolf took one stride forward and gripped her arms, so hard that she almost screamed. His face went deathly white.

"You'll apologize for that," he said savagely. "I came here because I realized that you might need my help. It was only what any decent man would do. I may be a fool, but I'm not a cur."

His eyes were blazing.

"You're hurting me," whispered Diana. A sudden rush of feeling enveloped her, but she fought it down. "Please try to behave like a gentleman—and drive me home."

Rolf winced. Then he made her an ironical bow, but his eyes were filled with pain.

"Certainly," he answered, "the sooner we get out of this place the better I'll be pleased." He swung round on Hunter, who was leaning shakily against a chair back.

"As far as you are concerned, Hunter," he said thickly, "I would like to give you the thrashing of your life. Not because of Claire. I realize now that she was as much to blame as you. But because of Diana. Thank your lucky stars she hit you before I got here."

He caught Diana up in the hall, opened the door, and, as a blinding gust of wind leaped at her, slid his arm round her waist; half supporting, half carrying her to the car. He made her comfortable with rugs, then took the wheel and pressed the self-starter. The engine surged into life. The lighted windows of the cottage suddenly vanished and darkness enveloped them.

Rolf made no attempt to speak. His face, as she saw when she glanced at it, was graven like an image cut in granite.

"Denny," she whispered breathlessly, "I'm sorry for what I said."

"That's all right," he muttered, "but try to remember next time that I'm not like Hunter."

Silence for a while. Again she broke it.

"Denny, why did you come back?"

"I've told you. Because I did not like the idea of leaving you alone with Hunter."

"Would you have come back if you had not met Claire and realized the truth about her?"

"I should have wanted to."

Another period of silence. Diana made a last desperate effort.

"Denny," she murmured, "won't you forgive me for—for what I said?"

He drew up the car before her door. At last he turned, and she saw that his face was a ghastly white.

"Does it matter whether I forgive you or not?" he said. "I've had a shock to-night. I'm just beginning to realize what a fool I've been."

"It matters," said Diana, a small flame of hope in her heart, "a great deal. I've always been fond of you, Denny, and one likes one's friends to have a decent opinion of one."

Somehow or other, as they sat there gazing into each other's eyes, her hand wandered into his, and he gripped it hard.

"I've been blind," he said abruptly. "Absolutely blind. I can't hope, of course, that you'll ever forgive *me*. But I'll tell you this much, when I thought of you in the hands of that cur it nearly drove me crazy."

"Why, Denny?" Diana asked innocently. "Do you—like me—that much?"

Shameless, of course. But if he wouldn't speak, what else could she do? He refused now to look at her, but his voice reached her clearly.

"It was you in the beginning that I loved," he was saying. "Then I became infatuated with some one else. But, even before I learned the truth about her, I had discovered that she was not the girl I wanted.

"Whatever you were, I still loved you. You'll never forgive me, of course; but, if it interest you to know it, I'll tell you that I love you; always did love you, and always shall. I've committed the unforgivable sin, I know. Now that you've heard the truth, hadn't you better get in before you catch your death of cold?"

"No, Denny, not yet," she told him. "Not until you've kissed me. Because, you see, my dear, I've always loved you, too."

A while later:

"I never understood you," said Denny.

Diana lifted her head from his shoulder.

"Does a man ever understand a girl?" she asked. Before he could reply a deep, amused voice interrupted them as the burly figure of a policeman loomed up in the rain beside the car.

"Hadn't you better move that car on?" he inquired.

Denny began to laugh as, for the first time, he looked about.

"Have a heart, old man," he answered. "This lady has just promised to marry me."

The cop grinned.

"Sorry, sir," he replied. "I hope you're happy, miss. Got a wife and six kids of me own at home. There's nothing like marriage. Good night, sir."

He vanished into the storm, and Denny took Diana again into his arms.

Love's Magic

YOU are the breath of apple-blossoms
That trembles from the orchard trees,
You are the whisper of the lilacs
That lives upon the April breeze,
You are the beauty of the roses
That lift to kiss the kindly rain,
And so I laugh, when folks are saying
That you are plain.

You are the murmuring of waters
That comes across the falling dusk,
You are the loveliness of dawning
In garden ways of myrrh and musk,
You are the fragrance of white lilies
That heals the anguish of despair,
And so I laugh, when folks are saying
You are not fair.

—Edgar Daniel Kramer

"Why, Marilyn, I can't begin to tell you how much I admire—like you!" Her heart skipped a beat

The Price of Her Dreams

"You can make your dreams come true!" she cried, and set out to prove it

By Dawn O'Day

MARILYN FENTON clutched her subway strap in a tight, fierce grip. With every lurch of the flying train she swayed from side to side, knocking against her strap-hanging neighbors, who scowled at her and grumbled under their breaths. As though it was her fault!

It was just past eleven o'clock in the evening. The train was jammed with theater crowds going home.

Marilyn shifted her weight wearily from one foot to the other. She was alone. It was at times like these that the full realization came to her of how alone she was. She closed her eyes to

shut out the burning glare of the bright subway lights, and swung limply from her strap. At last her station was called, and pushing with her shoulders and battling with her elbows, she finally fought her way to freedom. Ah, how nice it would have been to come home by motor, sunk in luxurious velvet depths, the windows open to the night and the starry sky!

She sighed, and hurried down the dark, deserted street. Her pace quickened at the thought of the warm bath and the clean, sweet-smelling bed. She was so tired, so tired. She was working much too hard, and when night came she found herself blurry and fatigued, good for nothing but bed and a deep sleep. Then up, brightly, in the early morning, to the same grind again. Well, only another week of it, thank goodness.

Feeling cool and refreshed, she lay in bed, thinking of to-morrow — and to-morrow—and to-morrow.

Two weeks ago, Mr. Cleve, her employer, had come flying into the office, distrait.

"Miss Fenton," his voice had been high, excited, "I'm going crazy. I'm up against a wall. You're the only one who can help me out. I've been tying my nerves up in a knot every day interviewing secretaries, but not one comes up to the standard. I've got a big deal on—stand a chance to clean up heavily. Would you like to help me?"

"Gladly, if I can."

"You can!" he had barked at her. "Work with me evenings, here. Seven to eleven. At double salary. And if the deal goes over—I can promise you you won't regret it."

She had taken it on. Twelve hours of work a day. Then bath, bed, the newspaper, and sleep. That had been the routine for the past weeks. But there was consolation in the fact that her bank balance was rising incredibly. Soon she would have enough money to do—what she had always wanted to do.

She sank back upon the pillow and ruffled the newspaper hastily to the society page.

Some girls make a dash for the movie page, or the bargain advertisements, or even the sport page. Marilyn loved to read the society news. She would read of this ball and that bazaar, somebody's début and somebody's honeymoon trip. Gilded visions would float before her eyes. She dreamed of delicate, silk draped beds, heaped high with little scented ribbon and lace pillows. Of Casaba melons nested on ice in a snug little silver tray, and coffee served in tall, slender pots, and scones crispy and yellow as sunlight. Of handsome men, dark, dashing and debonair, who carried their canes as though they were glittering swords. Oh, what a world!

"If I had money," she whispered fiercely to herself, "I'd buy clothes and I'd buy background. That's all the difference there is between us."

A WEEK later Mr. Cleve bounced into Marilyn's little office, waving a bunch of papers wildly and doing a good imitation of an Indian war dance.

"Got them—the contracts—" he explained in gasps. "You've been a jewel, Miss Fenton. Go 'way somewhere to-morrow—take a vacation—I can't thank you enough. Miss Fenton, we've won through!"

"I'm glad—oh, I'm glad!" It was good to feel her work had not been wasted.

"I'm not forgetting how you helped

'me out in this emergency." He sat down a minute to catch his breath.

Marilyn reached for her hat and coat and slipped them on. The tension and high pressure of the past weeks seemed already to have been lifted from her shoulders. Thank Heaven, she could sleep late to-morrow!

"Good night, Mr. Cleve," she called. "I'm very glad everything's gone over so splendidly."

"Wait a minute, young lady; wait a minute. Don't walk out on the party until you get your ice cream and cake." With that he extended a slip of paper to her.

She took it, wondering.

"Mr. Cleve!" She almost screamed it in her amazement. "Five hundred! F-for m-me!"

"Your help has given me a chance to make many times that," he said with a wave of his hand. "Take it and welcome, child. Buy yourself a new hat, or knitting needles, or whatever it is women buy. Try to come back in two weeks. And have a good time on your vacation. You've earned it."

"Good-by, Mr. Cleve." She felt like singing the words. "I'm terribly excited. Thank you so much. Good-by."

"'By." He was rereading the contracts.

Marilyn closed the door softly and danced down the corridor, trying not to shout her joy. How wonderful, how wonderful! Yes, but she *had* earned it. What would she do with it? Put it in the bank—perhaps get a better room, maybe an apartment—a new dress or two—theater once a week—a little luxury now and then instead of the barest necessities. Five hundred slowly and cautiously expended would go a long way, would make her daily living easier, pleasanter.

She was so excited, she stood at a curb and called "Taxi! Taxi!"

When the taxi drew up, the chauffeur saw a slim young girl with dark eyes dancing, slippered toes tapping impatiently, dart from the curb into his cab.

"There's a girl who's heard some good news," he thought to himself. "Looks like a society deb, too. Probably somebody's left her a couple of million to play around with."

And Marilyn, sitting snugly on the smooth leather seat, her hands clenched so tightly together the knuckles showed white, was asking herself hungrily, eagerly, "How much beauty, how much happiness can I buy for five hundred dollars?"

Suddenly something hot and tense seemed to gather in her heart and break, and she cried out blindly, "No, no, no! I won't do anything safe and sane and sensible. I won't spend it penny by penny. I'm going to make one gorgeous gesture. I know it's wild, it's reckless, it's a madcap thing to do—but it's beautiful. And if I don't do it, I'll regret it all my life. I'll give myself a few glorious weeks, and then—"

The chauffeur looked at her in a puzzled way when the cab drew up before her modest dwelling on the dark, deserted, unfashionable street. And he had thought her a society girl! Somehow she had that air, that indefinable touch of elegance.

As she paid him, he saw that her hands trembled, and she was biting her lips. Something big has certainly hit that little girl, he thought, and just as Marilyn turned to run upstairs he called out after her:

"Whatever it is, good luck to you, miss!"

"Th-thanks." She grinned back.

She felt his good wishes to be an omen of happiness ahead. She ran up the old stairs swiftly, singing under her breath. Oh, she must not think, must not think! If she thought about it at all, she feared her courage would fail her, her common sense would assert itself, and crush her wild, impulsive plans.

NEXT morning she settled herself with the morning paper, and for hours she pored over the society news and felt herself lifted in a haze of golden dreams. With a red pencil, she marked a cross against one of the hotels mentioned quite frequently on that page.

"That's the way pirates marked hidden treasure," she laughed exultantly to herself. "And I am marking mine."

First and foremost, she needed clothes. No more fifteen-dollar imitations of Parisian creations. She went to a fashionable shop on the avenue, her head whirring with plans. And just as she had hoped, she was able to buy really chic and charming costumes for one-fifth their original value, because they were listed as summer leftovers.

She had been starved for fine clothes so long. She bought and bought, exhilarated at the caressing touch of delicate silks. Her cheeks burned feverishly, and there were bright lights flaring in the dark depths of her eyes. Pretty she had always been, in a quiet, retiring, undramatic fashion—but now, with a touch of defiance in the tilt of her lovely head and the warm tones subtly reflected by her new clothes lighting up her features, she was beautiful.

Marilyn was amazed to see what color did to her hair and eyes and skin. She put on a gown of sunset gold, straight as a sheath, giving the slim curves of her supple figure the emphasis they deserved.

"Lovely!" breathed the saleslady in awe. "Exquisite! Ma'mselle, you have the most divine coloring, the rarest, too. Very seldom does a lady come with hair so golden, and eyes so velvet brown, and the fine, creamy skin that should go with such hair and such eyes. In that gown—a king will fall in love with you!"

"A prince will do!" laughed Marilyn.

She selected frocks the tender color of first grass, and frocks the color of pansies shot through with the silver of dew, and frocks the color of the sea when the sun has dropped into it. There were frocks of unrelieved white, cool and virginal and breath taking in their daring simplicity. There were sport clothes, pastel tinted, touched here and there with a flower, a monogram, a bit of ribbon. Clever little frocks, revealing even as they concealed, daring yet discreet.

There were underthings that looked sheer as bubbles, tinted like bubbles, too. A few little hats, snug helmets and drooping brimmed picture hats. Then slippers—gold and calf and suède and patent, opera and strapped and intricately crisscrossed. A last minute scurry for bags and handkerchiefs and gloves and scarves and stockings.

Done! Swiftly her pencil flew, marking prices, adding them up. A staggering total! Why, it would only leave her two weeks or so to wear all these gorgeous things in!

Quickly she made final preparations, wired for reservations, bought her ticket. The last minute excitement of departure, coupled with a persistent

premonition that something vital would happen to her, made her feel that it was all a dream. Was all this happening to her, Marilyn Fenton, who had worked all her days since school graduation, in an office full of girls like herself; who had hoped—and hungered; who had dreamed—and despaired?

She caught her breath until it hurt, and closed her eyes. And she didn't dare open them until she heard the regular rhythmic pounding of the wheels whirring over the rails, and when she did, she had to place her hand on her heart, it jumped so.

She watched the countryside flying by, a jumble of trees and houses and people and lakes. Soon the air would grow warmer, soon the flowers would give off fragrance, soon the birds would be filling the warm air with song, and women would be walking the roads in gingham dresses. She was going South!

LAKE CHATRAIN was like nothing she had ever seen or imagined. It was bright early morning. Even as Marilyn stood there on the hotel veranda, drinking in this scene with its liberating sense of space and distance and high free sky, the flowers seemed to open and spill their fragrance upon the air, making it giddy with sweetness.

She stared, fascinated, until a porter came up smiling and bowed her respectfully to her room overlooking the lake.

"Breakfus', ma'am?" prompted the porter.

Breakfast? She could not think of food. First she must run off to the side of the lake where she had observed a road began. There were woods there. And before any of the hotel guests arose she wanted to dash through the sweet-smelling dewy grass, shaking the feeling of the city out of her bones. Then she would feel ready to begin her campaign—but not before.

"No, no breakfast yet. Later. And is that a road down there by the lake?"

"Well, ma'am, I'd hardly call that a road. Reckon you'd more likely call that a trail. Lot of magnolia trees in there, ma'am. There's streams, too. Real woods, ma'am."

When the porter had gone, she jumped into the simplest sport dress she had, and without hat, scarf, bag, or any of the other "proper" accessories, dashed from the hotel, looking neither to right nor to left, glad that all the guests slept late, and glad that she had been the only train passenger to stop at Lake Chatrain.

"The other guests," she smiled to herself, "probably come in their limousines or yachts or aëroplanes or something."

She ran down a little slope, skirted a few trees, slipped on a mossy stone, and entered the little lake trail.

She danced up the lane, impulsively taking any turn that presented itself. The trees were huge and shadowy, streaked with sunlight. It was very still. Now and then a startled bird flashed from the ground in a brilliant arc of color. In the distance a stream tinkled. It was wild, exotic, beautiful.

Marilyn laughed breathlessly. She flung her head back, gay and exultant. And then, as she brought her eyes down to level again, she saw him.

HE was standing there quietly, watching her.

"Hello," he said, rather shyly. "You laugh beautifully. Are you from heaven?"

"No," she smiled, "only from the hotel."

"I can hardly believe you're real. And from the hotel?" he mused. "Why, there isn't any one at the hotel would dream of dancing through the woods—and at this hour. You've just arrived?"

"Five minutes ago."

"Then you're five minutes late," he chided her gently.

"Why"—she opened her eyes in surprise—"you talk as though we—we had arranged—an appointment—to meet here."

"Strange," he said, unsmiling; "but that *is* how I feel."

She leaned against a tree and shook a pebble out of her shoe.

"You ought to wear old things," he said. "What you've got on is much too good. And you'd better let me be your guide. That path to the right leads into a swamp. You're an adventurous child, aren't you, flying up this trail so confidently, never knowing where it will lead you?"

"Are you from the hotel, too?"

He stood there, tall and strong, in his old sweater and mud-caked shoes. His eyes were staring into hers with an intensity that frightened her a little. He smiled. And quite suddenly she decided that she liked him a lot, and that being here with him gave her a safe and warm feeling.

"Yes," he said. "I've been at the hotel for months."

Oh, she thought instantly, how rich he must be! Months at *this* hotel! He's wearing an old sweater for fun.

"I'm Terry Cooper. Here, jump that log. Take my hand. So-o-o. Fine. Now I'll show you where the stream begins."

"I'm Marilyn Fenton," she offered.

He bowed low over her hand, kissing it in cavalier fashion. Marilyn's heart skipped a beat. This was what she had dreamed of.

"Need I tell you that I am delighted to know you?"

"Oh!"

For one moment they looked into each other's eyes.

Then he caught her hand tightly in his and they began to run, darting behind tree trunks, jumping fallen logs, doubling under low branches, skipping from stone to stone.

The hairpins fell out of her hair and her golden hair tumbled in a cascade over her shoulders. Her velvety eyes seemed flecked with flickers of sunlight. Her whole being seemed vibrant, alive.

At last they came to a little incline like a shelf of rocks, and from somewhere in the hidden depths of rock a tiny torrent of water gushed.

"We are at the beginning," he said.

His eyes were upon her. She sensed that his words held a deeper significance.

"Hungry?" he asked abruptly. "Wait a moment."

He came back with a handkerchief full of berries.

"We really can't sit down to breakfast this way," she laughed, looking ruefully from her moss-stained shoes to her earth-streaked hands.

"Right you are, my lady of the woods," he laughed.

They bent down together, washed their hands and faces in the cool running water, then stooped to drink. It seemed such an intimate gesture that the hot color dyed her cheeks.

"Here," he commanded, spreading his old sweater on the ground, "lie down on that and rest. It's not long enough for all of you, so you'll have to put your head down on my lap."

He was so casual in his suggestion that she did not dare to refuse him for fear of insulting him. So, slightly self-conscious and embarrassed, she eased herself onto the sweater and dropped her head into his lap.

"Open your mouth! Catch!"

And he popped red berries into her mouth. They were sweet and luscious, and the rich dye stained her mouth audaciously. She could not know how beautiful she looked, with the sunlight playing over her mouth and eyes. In silence he dangled a berry, then let it drop into her mouth. In silence he brushed her hair back from her forehead.

They glided softly along, two hearts in unison

The silence grew tremulous, significant.

"Lovely, lovely Marilyn," he murmured.

The sunlight was making her drowsy. The fragrance of the air, the sweetness of the berries, his fingers on her forehead, drifting over her face—

"Happy?" His voice was so soft.

"Very happy." Her voice was as soft.

"I wish this could last forever. You and me—like this. It's like a dream—a beautiful, perfect dream."

"Beautiful . . . perfect . . ."

Ah, what a day, what a place! And he had such fine eyes; so honest, so steady. And he had such lovely hair; the kind that makes a woman's fingers ache to caress into little curls. His fingers were so sensitive and strong.

"Did you come to the hotel because you were bored?"

"Bored?" she echoed laughingly. "Why, I'm never bored. I feel too alive, too eager for life. Why, I haven't begun to live yet—how can I be bored with life?"

"Thank God!" he murmured fervently. "You're beautiful. You're

ideal. Will you let me see you often? Oh, we'll have awfully jolly times together, I'm sure. I'm positive we like the same things. Do you like music?"

"I sing a little."

"Boy, isn't that great? Marilyn, I tell you this truthfully. I have never spent so happy a day in my life as this."

Marilyn smiled, a slow, wistful smile. Nor had she.

SUDDENLY she jumped to her feet. She remembered why she had come here. Why, all this might have happened in Central Park—a girl with tumbled hair and moss-stained shoes—and a boy with a faded old sweater—and trees—and a stream.

She must get back—back to the hotel, fling herself into hotel activities, put on her stunning clothes, discipline herself, adopt a pose of hauteur and dignity and reserve, look like somebody, act like somebody—and finally—become somebody!

"I must get back," she whispered. "I must get back."

"All right," he nodded. "You'll see me often—you promised."

"Yes, Terry—I promised." She ran ahead, happy.

Coming out of the woods, she looked up at the hotel.

"Oh-h-h!" she gasped.

It was a disconcertingly active scene, people sauntering here and there in little knots, people clustered on the huge porch. She knew the vital importance of first impressions. If the hotel guests saw her like this, looking rather wildly disheveled, her hair flying, her gown wrinkled, her shoes and stockings stained—she might lose all chance to make friends among them. Oh, no; no one must see her; no one!

Somehow it didn't matter with Terry Cooper. Somehow she felt she need not pose to impress him.

"Here, get on this side of me, between me and the tree," Terry offered, sensing her discomfort, "and we'll turn in at the side up there, where it is marked 'Employees' Entrance.' No one will see you, and you can reach your room through the service elevator. See you later?"

"Uh-huh," she nodded absently, for just as she strode past the hotel porch, well hidden by the towering form of Terry, she had sent an inquisitive glance out of the corner of her eye. It was he! Instantly she had recognized him.

How many times she had brooded over his pictures in the society columns! How many times she had envied the girls who danced with him and dined with him! How many times she had assured herself, in an agony of weariness and frustration, that if ever their paths crossed, and they met—she would move heaven and earth to win him, to make Jefferson Jay Bidwell *want* to make Marilyn Fenton his wife!

And now—

He was here—and she was here!

"'By, Terry," she breathed excitedly; "thanks. I must run. It was a lovely morning."

Terry, with courtly gravity, pressed his lips to her hand. His heart was in his eyes.

Without saying a word, his eyes seemed to tell her: "We have a secret. It is something that only you know and I know."

Something fluttered in her heart. She gulped.

"I must run," she cried.

Alone in her room, she regarded her mirrored image in high exultation.

"Oh, it's too beautiful, too gorgeous, too amazing a thing to happen to me! Is it real?" She looked about the room. The room was real enough, the dressing table beneath her eyes, the shimmering new frocks hung neatly in the wardrobe by the hotel lady's maid, the dresser drawers full of soft-scented underthings and wisps of handkerchiefs and cobwebby stockings and splashy scarves. Real, all real!

With trembling fingers she undressed and slippered into a negligee exotically edged with fluffy marabou.

She ordered her lunch brought to her room, knowing wisely that a woman who is fetching in sport clothes in the bright sunlight, will be absolutely bewitching in evening dress under the glamorous light of the moon.

She preferred, the first time she crossed Jefferson Jay Bidwell's horizon, to be absolutely bewitching.

THAT evening she dressed very carefully for dinner. She wore a gown of gold, the hem edged in fiery little feathers, one slim shoulder bare, the other caught up lightly with a ball of feathers that tapered delicately down the back. Her earrings were long and golden filigree, swinging exotically as she walked. She caught her breath as she stared at the mirror.

She hesitated at the head of the stairs, gaining poise. Then swept down like a queen, head high and eyes straight ahead. She saw him near the dining room door. Ah, he was handsome, tall, suave. He was so assured, so incontestably in the right place. He belonged here.

Passing him, Marilyn caught his eyes and held them. Then, her golden head unhesitantly high, her eyes staring unflickeringly straight ahead, her poise perfect and possessed, she brushed by. Despite the terror in her heart, and the tumult in her blood, she knew that his eyes were following her.

All through dinner she sat there, her eyes impersonally regarding a far wall or demurely inspecting her plate. She toyed delicately with her food, as did every one else. Only the older people ate with undisguised appetite. The heavy crystal candelabra revolved slowly, suspended by silver chains from the ceiling. Every table held a silver vase and a cluster of delicate rosebuds. The damask tablecloth was stiff and white, and the silverware glittered. The waiters moved noiselessly and expertly, like so many clever automatons. From somewhere at the back of the room, music came in waves, haunting, exquisite, stirring the senses.

After a little while, toward dessert, she felt a bit surer of herself. She permitted her eyes to stray a little, to light on a face here and there. Oh, that was Mrs. De Beckwith, and with her was Colonel Westingson. The girl at the right was Yvonne Randell, and to her left were the honeymooning Gerald and Monica Truman Duke. She recognized them from their newspaper photographs. To think that she was here, sitting in their midst, having the same rug under her feet, listening to the same sweet music!

Across the room she saw Jefferson Jay Bidwell. Her heart leaped. He was alone—as she was. And his eyes were on hers. She felt her cheeks flush, and turned her head to hide her confusion from his eyes.

Where was Terry? She did not see him. Irresistibly, her eyes turned back to the far table at which a man sat alone. He smiled to her, a faint, vague smile, just a slight turning up of the

corners of his mouth. Her heart hammering, she smiled back, the same slight suggestion of a smile.

Hurrah! she felt like shouting in her excitement.

But she sat there, looking dignified and demure, nibbling politely at the delicious foods, feeling dazed and frightened and elated.

She swept by his table on her way out. He regarded her from between lids narrowed inscrutably, and his eyes ran up and down her form in a swift summary.

Men had looked like that at her before, and always she had wanted to slap them, hard. But now she felt flattered, felt as though she had accomplished something very difficult.

She walked to the end of the huge porch and leaned against the tall white column to steady her trembling body.

The night was mysterious in its allure. The lake glimmered silvery under the moonlight. The trees looked huge and dark and fantastic, and made a soft swishing murmur with their leaves. The sky seemed low and crowded with stars, and the moon looked large and vivid.

"I BEG your pardon." A voice at her shoulder startled her.

Turning, she found herself face to face with Jefferson Jay Bidwell.

"Where have we met before?"

She felt like giggling. So many men had used that sentence as the opening wedge in flirtation. But she sensed that he meant "at whose début?" or "at what ball?"

"We have never met before," she heard herself saying with cool insolence. Then to temper the harshness of her words, she smiled with just the right touch of challenge, of reserve.

His pictures didn't do him justice, she thought hurriedly. He was infinitely more attractive. His mouth had a tender curl, but his eyes were perpetually mocking. Marilyn felt that here was a man who, on provocation, could be extremely cruel or extraordinarily kind.

"May we dispense with formality? I am Jefferson Jay Bidwell."

"Are you?" she murmured rudely, as if it didn't matter in the least. She felt instinctively that here was a man who recoiled if followed, a man who preferred to pursue.

"I know, of course, that you are Marilyn Fenton." He took out a cigarette and looked at her. "But who is Marilyn Fenton?"

Who, indeed? She felt anger rising in her.

"Is it—less annoying—to travel as Marilyn Fenton?"

So! He thought her a movie star, or a singer, or an international spy, or somebody famous and important.

"In Lake Chatrain—I am Marilyn Fenton."

"Oh." He bowed. Then:

"You're beautiful." The words tore out of him as if against his will. "You have bewitched me utterly. You will see me—often?" His voice pleaded with her.

"It is possible," she murmured.

"How long are you staying, Marilyn Fenton?"

For answer, she shrugged her shoulders lightly.

"That depends on a great many things," she smiled.

"You make all the women here seem gray and old. You have youth and fire and beauty."

She smiled sleepily, looking at him through her long lashes.

"I must go," she breathed.

"No, please stay. There's a dance in the ballroom to-night. Come with me. I want to dance with you."

"You want to hold me in your arms," said Marilyn slowly, insolently.

And the next instant she was gone.

He looked at the place beside him where, a moment ago, had stood a beautiful warm woman, all gold and silver and fire.

"Lovely, lovely thing. Who is she?" he murmured.

THE next morning, at sunrise, she was up and out of the hotel. She saw the maids in the lobbies emptying ash trays, setting chairs right, arranging the curtains. She saw the gardeners clipping the lawns, snipping dewy flowers for the breakfast tables. The air was full of lively bird chatter, but the whole hotel seemed to be sound asleep.

"Hello!" came an eager voice beside her.

She wheeled, smiled into the smiling eyes of Terry.

"Hello yourself. Up early, aren't you?"

"No earlier than you are. I thought you wouldn't be the sort of girl who dawdles in bed until noon and has her breakfast brought to her on a tray."

Marilyn's cheeks flushed. Why, that was exactly the sort of girl she was hoping to be!

"I felt you'd come to-day—as you did yesterday," his voice went on with boyish eagerness and impulsiveness, "so I got a canoe ready. We'll paddle down the lake to a dandy spot I know—and you won't have to depend on berries for breakfast, because I stocked up."

"Sweet of you, Terry," she murmured. He *was* sweet.

He settled her comfortably among the cushions, and began to paddle with swift, clean strokes. The canoe glided easily along the blue water. She trailed her hand languidly over the side, the finger tips dipping in the warm water.

Funny, she mused to herself, how she had only wanted Jefferson Jay Bidwell to see her by moonlight. She realized suddenly that with Bidwell she was deliberately schooling herself to play a game, while with Terry she was herself.

As if he were following her innermost thoughts, Terry shot her a quick glance, and then abruptly looked away.

"I saw you last night. You were gorgeous, stunning. You set the whole hotel buzzing. The men are interested—the women are jealous. I must have been the only one who wasn't so impressed with you."

Her heart skipped a beat.

"You saw me? I didn't see you."

"No? You sat with your back to me."

"Why—why didn't you think—?"

"Oh, I did think you were the most beautiful thing in the hotel, Marilyn. Don't misunderstand me. Only I've got an advantage over the rest of them. I saw you yesterday morning—and I'm with you this morning. And gosh, Marilyn, you look best to me like this—simple, and unaffected, something of the wild gypsy kid, the comrade of the woods and the lake."

So he didn't approve of the girl she wanted to be.

She was silent.

"Gosh, Marilyn," he was genuinely distressed. "What a fool I am to talk that way! Why, Marilyn, I—I can't begin to tell you how much I admire you—I like you so much any way at all, but best this way! I never liked a girl before half as much as I like you. We'll have some great times together."

He took her hand tightly in his and grinned warmly at her. Heavens, she thought, with a little tremor of excitement and misgiving chasing around her heart, he's fallen hard—and fast!

"This—this seems a pretty enough spot," she spoke quickly, anxious to get back on more solid footing with him. "And I am starved this morning."

HE pulled in and helped her ashore. It was one of those perfect romantic nooks with an overhanging tree and a carpet of tiny field flowers sloping down to the water, that Marilyn, with yearning eyes, had seen again and again in the movies.

He was very adept, and soon he had a camp fire going, and bacon and eggs were sizzling in a skillet and coffee was bubbling gayly and spicing the air with its pleasant aroma.

"Uhmm. Good," she smiled happily as she ate. This was a wish come true—breakfast with a good friend. How much better than the lonely meal she used to bolt before the dash into the subway. She shuddered at the memory now.

"Cold?" he bent over her solicitously.

"No. This is great fun. Terry, are your parents here with you?" She threw out the question casually.

"My parents?" He laughed heartily. "Here? Of course not. They're in Italy, I think. This isn't far south enough for them."

She relaxed against the tree trunk in relief. To face his rich and cultured parents so early in the game would have disconcerted her sadly. She trembled when she thought of cold eyes surveying her carefully through lorgnettes, eyes not clouded with emotion—as were Terry's. Well, fortunately, she would not have to conquer the parents until she had completely conquered the son!

Lying there, stretched upon the warm blanket Terry had thoughtfully provided for her comfort, with Terry's eyes adoringly upon her, her mind was busy planning, planning, planning.

"Let's start for home, Terry. I want to get back."

He was disappointed. "Oh, why? So early? Got a date?"

She merely smiled.

"Perhaps," she teased.

"With—with Bidwell? I saw him leave just after you passed his table last night."

"I beg your pardon." Her manner grew cool and distant. "Must I account to you for everything I do?"

"Oh, I'm sorry." He looked quite miserable and contrite. "I'm sorry I spoke out of turn. Forgive me."

"Well, all right. But let's hurry."

They spoke very little on the return trip. Between them something new existed. Yesterday morning they had returned from their impromptu excursion feeling warm and merry and carefree. But now—there was a sense of things unsaid between them.

Tensely, quietly, each of them sensed this new thing.

They separated at the foot of the slope. She entered the hotel through the huge columned front porch. Somewhat surprised, she watched him walk on, until he ducked into the doorway marked "Employees' Entrance."

"Maybe he still thinks it's yesterday morning," she said to herself. And the next moment she had forgotten him, because a certain tall, distinguished figure had risen hastily from a porch chair, and now made its way toward her with all the haste that is compatible with dignity.

But she was not to be deceived by

his seemingly leisurely approach. Her eyes discerned the subdued excitement in his stride, the enthusiasm that burned in the narrowed eyes. Her heart leaped.

"Where have you been, Marilyn Fenton?" he greeted her. "I've searched everywhere for you. I have done everything but dredge the lake."

"Strange," she smiled, "for that is where I was. On the lake."

"Would you like to come for a little drive into the country? My chauffeur's been waiting at the wheel all morning. If he hasn't stiffened into stone, he'll drive us out to an awfully good little tea room I know on the Wilington Ridge, and we can lunch there. Will you take me on?"

"It might be—amusing." She had read enough smart society stories to know they always wanted things to be amusing. "Yes," she said coolly, "I'll take you on—for lunch."

By the sudden inquiring lift of his eyebrows, she knew he had not missed the meaning in her tone. She knew her words had piqued his interest.

She smiled over her shoulder at him as she hurried up the broad white steps of the porch.

MARILYN tried on half a dozen costumes before she finally decided on a two-piece frock of October brown, having as sole ornament a row of dazzling gold buttons. With this went a snug little cloche hat banded demurely in gold, and brown suède slippers, buckled.

As she came to meet him, an hour later, he gave her a quick appraising glance, and extended his hand smilingly. She settled herself serenely beside Jefferson Jay Bidwell. The tonneau top of the stunning French-blue imported car was down, and just as the car swung down the gravel path, she saw Terry jump aside to avoid being run down. She got a flash of bewildered reproachful eyes staring into her own. Then a cloud of dust rose between them, and the accusing eyes were blotted out.

"The country's not so bad on a day like this, is it?"

Not so bad? She felt like laughing. Why, it was magnificent, marvelous.

"No, not so bad," she agreed quietly. "Although it doesn't at all compare with the Riviera. Nothing like the Corniche Road to Monte Carlo for motoring. Moonlight on the sea—and a car going at a seventy-mile clip." Somewhere, in some novel, she had read that.

"Do you spend much time on the Riviera?"

"I used to. Every winter. But now that it is overrun with American tourists, I've decided to spend my winters here while they stamp all over the Riviera."

He laughed appreciatively.

"Ever get into Spain?" he asked casually.

She could not resist the temptation to play up to him. He thought her some one mysterious and cultured and much traveled. She must appear to be what he thought her.

"Yes, often. I've been to the San Sebastián bull fights. Colorful, aren't they? Everybody dancing and drinking and singing and throwing confetti. Why, I remember one day—" and she went on to tell him some utterly fantastic episode about a stabbing in the public square.

He listened courteously.

She was so carried away by her own vivid imagination that she almost believed these stories herself.

With a start she caught herself up. She was appalled at what she had said. She was too far in now to crawl out. So, laughing, she made up some more little tales of this that had happened to her in California, and that in a London antique shop, and that in Venice during the Flower Carnival.

Fervently she thanked the public library for the travel knowledge it had given her.

She lay back against the yielding velvet cushion. The car purred like a contented kitten. The man beside her listened attentively, speaking little, his eyes eloquent.

Oh, how heavenly!

"Awfully boring at the hotel, isn't it?" His voice startled her out of her reverie.

Boring? Why, it was the most exciting event in her life—this hotel. Boring? How absolutely absurd! But—

"Yes," she murmured.

With sudden sureness she knew that he was playing to her, and she sang as never before

It was for this she had hoped! It was of this she had dreamed! But it would be over in a few hours. Oh, somehow, anyhow, she must plan to make this hers — forever! Her finger nails bit into her clenched palms in agony.

They lunched at a wayside inn that boasted honeysuckle vines.

While Marilyn was toying daintily with her crisp golden square of waffle, he suddenly leaned over the table and closed his hand over hers.

"Don't call me Mr. Bidwell. Let me be 'Jay' to you, Marilyn. I warn you—you shall not elude me to-night. To-night you will give me some dances?"

"Gladly." She smiled graciously, like a queen conferring a favor.

THAT evening, as she entered the brilliantly lit lobby, looking like an enchanted princess risen from the sea in her cool green sheath of a gown, Terry leaped up to greet her.

"Darling!" he said, and his voice was husky; "the afternoon has been endless—without you."

Darling! He had called her "*darling!*" Her heart seemed to rise in exultation. He looked so handsome in his evening clothes, and he wore them well and with great ease. She had a warm, happy feeling in her heart. Perhaps she ought to forget about the difficult Jefferson Jay Bidwell, and take this man who adored her so obviously, and for whom she felt such a tingle of immediate response?

But no, marriage with Bidwell would be a brilliant triumph. It would be foolish to give up without half trying. She reasoned so, trying to be cool and casual and calculating.

"May I meet you—after the ball?" He was breathless with eagerness. Oh, she flushed guiltily, she didn't deserve such devotion. But why *after* the ball?

Before she could answer, a familiar figure came closer.

"Please, Marilyn."

She nodded hastily, and he walked away as though to an important appointment. Marilyn was puzzled, but she turned to smile into the eyes of Jefferson Jay Bidwell.

He led her into the glittering ballroom, and as the band struck up and the sweet subtle music filled the air seductively, they danced away on the empty floor. They were the first to arrive. How eager he must have been to hold her in his arms, Marilyn thought gladly to herself.

She seemed to float on waves of happiness. She wanted to feel that life for her would be but a prolongation of such beautiful days and enchanting nights. Her shining eyes danced over the heads of the other couples to the garlanded wall, to the swinging crystal chandeliers, to the little French gilded chairs grouped politely under the open windows, to the little orchestra at the back of the room half hidden by banked flowers, to—

Suddenly the room reeled before her startled eyes. Could it be? Was it possible? Terry, sitting at the piano, thumping out the jazz music with a little group of men, all in dinner jackets, all looking as if they might be guests! Terry! Working here? No wonder he had known the "Employees' Entrance," had said "*after* the ball." Terry—the rich man's son! She felt bitterness and disillusion crash and swell in her heart.

At the end of the number, smilingly, Jay released her.

"You dance divinely, Marilyn," he murmured. "You are so cool, so remote, so elusive—even when you are in my arms."

"I'm sorry," she pleaded earnestly, "but I'm not feeling very well. You'll pardon me?"

And forgetting dignity, forgetting poise, she ran across the shining floor, up the main staircase, and into her room.

For a long time she lay huddled in a chair, thinking.

And at length:

"Silly," she said to herself, "why

are you so shocked? Perhaps Marilyn Fenton meant to him what Jefferson Jay Bidwell means to you. Perhaps he's also hungry for beauty and peace and a life full of color and music and gayety? And perhaps he thought to attain them through you—as you do through Jay? Why should you think that what is right for you is wrong for him?"

She quivered under this lash of self-analysis. Oh, but he had seemed so sincere, so straightforward! And all the time he had been lying. Well, came the cold thought, and wasn't she? He had said his parents were in Europe—hadn't she lied about European trips?

THE telephone ringing interrupted her thoughts.

"Hello, Marilyn. I've been waiting and waiting. What on earth has happened to you?"

How dared he—how dared he pursue her so?

"I'm not feeling well." Her voice was faint. Oh, Terry had seemed so nice, so nice. And his eyes—

"No. Impossible. Busy to-morrow—and the next day—and the next day." Her voice trailed away.

"But I don't understand." He sounded bewildered, hurt. In the darkness she could feel his accusing eyes upon her. "What has happened to make you change so suddenly? What have I done?"

"Good night." She rang off. How could she tell him that what he had done was to snap the bubbles of her dreams?

She went to bed, feeling older and wiser—and more desperate about Jay.

The next morning she awoke early, but lay long in bed. When she rang for breakfast it was brought to her in bed. Slender segments of orange arranged artistically like a flower. French crispy rolls beside little glistening pats of butter. Marmalade in a little crystal jar, and a tall silver coffee urn with a knob on the lid. And by the crystal marmalade jar lay a bouquet of small pink roses, just beginning to bud.

She picked them up with a little cry of anticipation. A small square of paper shook out of the leaves. Curious, she picked it up. Was it from Terry—explaining things?

DEAR MARILYN:

I hope you feel as fresh as these roses this morning. Perhaps a drive would do you some good?

My car—and myself—are at your disposal.

JAY.

She lingered over her breakfast, determined to enjoy it. When Jay telephoned to ask her plans, she told him yes, she would like nothing better than to go driving with him.

The days went quickly, now. She went everywhere with Jay. They drove, they danced, they lunched at many wayside inns. They swam together, they drifted in canoes, they hiked up mountain trails. She had never played golf or tennis or ridden a horse. So she feigned boredom with golf and tennis.

"It's so silly," she shrugged, "to walk miles after a ball—or to keep leaping in the air for it."

But he was rather persistent about riding. When she felt the big beast move under her for the first time, she had such a wave of panic she almost fainted. But she smiled bravely, and somehow she managed to sit her mount, and after they had jogged up the trail and back, she rather liked it.

Especially when, nearing the house, she saw Terry walking along, hands deep in his pockets, seeming lost in his

thoughts. The sight of the old faded sweater gave her a pang. He looked up just then and saw her.

"Hello," he said, and she saw him gulp.

She nodded, graciously, impersonally.

"Who is he?" came the measured tones of Jay beside her.

"Oh, you always want to know who people are!" she said sharply, angrily.

"It is very important," he said quietly. "I must know for my own protection."

At first she did not understand him. Then, suddenly, it came to her. Certainly!—a man like Jay, with his position and his wealth—he would attract suave society crooks, adventuresses and fortune hunters. Perhaps—perhaps he thought her one. Her face went white and her hands went limp on the reins.

"I'm afraid we've been out too long in the sun," he said, leaping down from his horse, and gently helping her down.

"Yes, it *is* warm," her words hardly were above a whisper.

A groom took their horses.

The manager was coming toward them, smiling, sleek. He welcomed them profusely, for this was Jefferson Jay Bidwell, and if the name, Marilyn Fenton, recalled nothing to him, it meant a great deal if mentioned in one breath with Bidwell.

"We are arranging an amateur night for Friday," he began. "Each of our distinguished guests who is also talented in any degree, will be good enough to agree to entertain. May we count on you, Miss Fenton—a dance, a dramatic dialogue, a song?" he suggested humbly.

Marilyn hesitated. She knew she had a sweet if small singing voice. It might impress Jay—

"One song," agreed Marilyn.

The manager gushed his thanks and moved away.

"You know, Jay, I am leaving next week."

"It's not so unbearable here now, is it, Marilyn? We seem to be having a rather decent time of it. Oh, stay on, won't you, another week or two or three?"

Another week—or two—or three? Ah, if she could! But she had only bought a two weeks' stay in paradise.

"Must you go on?" His voice was low.

"Yes."

"I see."

They were silent.

"Jay"—she lifted her eyes to his suddenly—"will you miss me—if—when I go?"

"Terribly."

"Then—then maybe I'll stay," she murmured gently, and ran swiftly away before she should see the effect of her bold words.

IT was amazing how little she managed to see of Terry. It was almost as if they had never spoken to each other at all, never laughed together, as if he had never said "*darling*," and she had never listened to him.

It was inevitable that they should meet about the hotel. She would pass him in the lobby, on the lawn, near the stables. When she danced the lovely Southern evenings away, held securely in Jay's arms, she would look over his handsome shoulder to see the pianist bowed over his instrument, his hands lifting and falling rhythmically, making music. Those strong, sensitive hands!

Sometimes their eyes would catch and hold. But after that encounter on

the road, when she had nodded distantly to his shy "hello," as to a presumptuous stranger, he never looked her way. And if his eyes by chance should encounter hers, he would look coldly away.

It piqued her pride at first, but she reasoned with herself that it was foolish to be upset by a mere pianist when a man with Jay's background of family and wealth and culture, showed her such marked attention.

One day, sitting before her mirror, an impish thought came to her. She considered it. Yes, often a sudden announcement precipitated matters to a crisis that would otherwise be indefinitely delayed.

So that evening she put on a gown of pansy hue, shot through with splashes of dewy silver that swished and glistened with every move she made. It put violet lights into her eyes and made you think immediately of the beautiful, still and starry night.

After two dances she suggested:

"It is rather close in here. Shall we have a breath of air, Jay?"

"My lady commands."

He closed the wrap about her shoulders lingeringly. She knew he was breathing the soft scent of her hair.

"The night is beautiful," she murmured.

"Marilyn is beautiful," he corrected gently.

"Jay, you've been very nice to me." She hesitated a moment, made a sweeping dramatic gesture that included sky and lake. "Leaving all this. And you. I'm going to-morrow."

"To-morrow?" It *had* caught him off guard. For once his inscrutably narrowed eyes had opened widely, his voice had been quick with emotion.

"Yes."

"Oh, don't go, Marilyn, don't go."

She felt that this was the moment.

"Why not?" she asked slowly, significantly.

He looked into the velvet eyes, dark as night, turned up to look into his.

"Because you've interested me immensely, Marilyn. Because you're so beautiful. Because you don't expect me to make incessant love to you. And because you've had the sense to realize that marriage is not in my program."

Her cheeks flamed. Her throat felt unbearably dry.

"It's been a pleasant interlude. It's been very nice to know you. But now, I suppose we shall never see each other again. I'm off to South America—and you—Paris, perhaps?"

Oh, this was terrible! How humiliating, how insulting he could be! His voice was mocking and his eyes looked cruel. He had led her on to believe—what? Deliberately, she had offered him numerous opportunities—had invited him unmistakably to make love to her. And this was his answer!

A pleasant interlude—in a life compiled entirely of pleasant interludes. But for her—crash, her dreams came tumbling resoundingly about her ears!

Nothing, now—first Terry gone, now Jay. She could never again be so hurt, so unhappy, so humiliated!

Ah, if we could but foresee our to-morrows!

"Good-by, Jay," she murmured bravely, and back to her hotel room she went, determined to leave by the first morning train.

"My bill in the morning," she phoned the office. "And reservations on the first train leaving."

IN the morning the manager himself brought her bill. But this time he was not so gushing or so humble or so ingratiating.

The bill was more than she had anticipated! Extras...

Three times he counted the bills she had handed to him—all the money she had left. Each time he shook his head.

"Not enough. Of course madam can wire for such a trifling sum."

She bit her lip in agony. Wire?

"Or perhaps Mr. Bidwell can help madam . . ."

"No!" she flared angrily, cut him short with a look.

"Or perhaps Mr. Cooper might..."

"No!" she cried again. Imagine Terry knowing...

"I'll work my bill out. I can type, and take dictation and help around the office."

The manager regarded her scornfully, his lips curved in a sneer.

"Not such a happy end to your game, eh?" he said. "All right, you can begin right away. We'll hold your trunk. You are not required to wear evening clothes in the office."

Her face burned. Her fingers tingled. But she swallowed hard and said nothing, following him meekly downstairs.

Automatically her fingers fell upon the keys. She felt numb. All the fight seemed to have ebbed out of her. She felt beaten, ironically defeated, miserable and alone, her dreams dust. The typewriter rattled under her deft fingers. The manager smiled in relief. Here was a girl who could really *work* her way free.

Vaguely, she was grateful no guests ever came into the office. She would hide here until she could run home. For the first time since she had left, she thought of home again. What an end to a high-hearted adventure in quest of romance and happiness! Her heart felt heavy as a stone. It was dreadful—degraded to the position of an employee, and without actual salary, where a day ago she had lorded it as a guest and paid her way carelessly!

Oh, what would Jay say if he should see her? He might be cruel and laugh. He might be kind and not recognize her. More than that she could not expect.

And Terry? If she should bump into him at the "Employees' Entrance," wearing her dark little office dress, looking meek and defeated and forlorn, would he say "hello" to her, or look through her with eyes that did not see her, and walk away? More than that she did not deserve.

The days passed slowly on leaden feet. She was back to where she had begun. She was working in an office. The fact that the office was set in a brilliant fashionable hotel did not touch her life. She was definitely outside it all. On occasion, coming in or out of the office on a business errand, she heard gay laughing voices, saw a flare of colored frock, caught a woman's gesture, a man's glance. At such moments she felt that life was torturing her unbearably, mocking her to madness.

THEN, one day, with the hot afternoon sun lying in a golden pool upon the floor, the thing she had feared most, happened. Somehow, in her heart, she had known it must come.

Her hand was on the knob of the door. One moment later and she might have been safely on the other side. But in that fatal moment a finger fell inquiringly upon her arm.

"Marilyn? Is it you? What are you doing here?" His eyes darted from her to the office door, to the pencil clutched in her icy fingers. "Are you—"

"I'm working," she said with disarming simplicity.

"Working?" he echoed blankly. "Is it a wager?"

She smiled crookedly. "No. I have to."

"But why? In God's name, why?"

"Otherwise I couldn't live, couldn't eat and sleep. I'm stony broke. All my money's gone."

"All your money's gone?"

"Yes. Oh, Jay, I've lied and lied and lied to you. I'm nothing—I'm nobody. I'm really just Marilyn Fenton. I must get back to my work."

"No, no." There was deep concern in his voice. He caught her hand in his. "Come, sit down with me. I want to talk to you."

"Oh, no; I'm sure employees are not permitted—"

His lips tightened to a straight line. Without another word, his hand guiding her elbow, he walked with her into the farthest corner of the porch, away from prying, inquisitive eyes.

"You're brave, Marilyn. You're dear and sweet. It was splendidly courageous of you not to run away—but to face the music the way you did."

"Am doing," she corrected gently. "And Jay, I want to confess more. I've never been to Paris or the Riviera or San Sebastián. I've never been outside of New York before. I lied terribly. And when I work my bill out here—I'm going back to another office in New York—and a hall bedroom—and all that goes with it." She gulped. Oh, it would be hard, harder than it had ever been before—with this golden interlude to jump out of her memories and mock her! "See, Jay, see?"

"I see," he said slowly. "But one thing I don't see, is why you did this? Why you came here as you did?"

She looked into his eyes. No, he was telling the truth. He didn't see. He took money and travel and clothes and good times so casually for granted, it would be impossible for him to realize what they would mean to one who was starved for them.

"It's difficult to explain," she murmured. "And to understand. And"—she shrugged her shoulders—"what does it matter, now?"

"But it does matter. Marilyn, I'm just beginning to know how much you do matter to me. You're so fine and spirited." He kissed her hand tenderly. "Marilyn," he said, and paused a moment. His voice was very low and husky with emotion. "Marilyn, why don't you help me? I'm trying to ask you to marry me—to tell you that I love you, little girl."

SHE stared at him, aghast. Was this Jay, proposing marriage to her? Even as it satisfied her pride she realized that it did not touch her heart. Last week, oh, last week to have heard those words would have sent her into a daze of happiness. Marriage with Jay! But now? She realized that she had grown older and wiser; that her values had shifted.

"Jay," she said slowly, distinctly, "I will help you. You don't love me—you admire me for my courage, and you pity me for my bad luck." She shook her head sadly. "But that isn't love. Jay, I like you now better than I ever did—but that, too, isn't love."

"Marilyn, together we can do—"

"Good-by, Jay." Swiftly she stood on tiptoe and imprinted a soft kiss upon his forehead. And like a wisp of wind, she was gone.

She ran through the lobby blindly. And so collided with some one.

"Oh, I'm sorry." She looked up. Terry's eyes looked down into hers.

She wanted most at that moment to fling her arms about his neck, to draw his cheek down to hers, to caress his hair.

Terry looked down at her, then bowing stiffly, he muttered, "My fault, I'm sure," and brushed coldly by.

For one reeling moment Marilyn felt as though the ground had slipped from under her feet, and darkness was plunging at her. The next she was walking sedately toward the office.

Fortunately the manager was out. She sat in her hard little desk chair, fighting a wild impulse to laugh. First Terry and Jay, now neither. When Terry had wanted her she had closed her heart to him. And now? Oh, how could she have been so blind, so carried away by vanity and glitter? Nothing in the world mattered to her now — except Terry. In one terrific flare of truth she realized that now. And Terry was lost to her. Irrevocably lost. She could not forget the steady look, the formal bow, the tall, familiar figure walking away. Away. Out of her life.

"...So you may consider your status the old one for the single night. It seems the only decent thing to do. Since you were announced for the amateur night's performance—and you *are* still here on the hotel premises—you will kindly put on your prettiest evening frock, and be a guest of the hotel again. For one night."

She had hardly been aware of the manager, standing there before her, talking words at her. It was some time before she realized the significance of his words.

Dully she nodded. She would agree to anything. Nothing mattered now, any more. Her heart was numb with pain.

"Are you listening to me, Miss Fenton? The amateur performance is tonight. Will you kindly go now? We'll put you on early, so that you won't be kept up late. You know you have to be in the office by nine to-morrow."

As in a dream, she rose and closed the door behind her. How could she sing? Your heart must be gay and joyous to sing. As in a dream, she dressed. She selected the gown she had worn her first night here, the gown of gold with its hem edged fantastically in fiery little feathers, one slender shoulder bare, the other caught up lightly with a ball of feathers that tapered delicately down her back. The golden hair back—so! Softly rippling, drawn back from the forehead, the tiny ears exposed. Long, exotic earrings of golden filigree that swung with every movement of her head.

She looked at her ringless hands, and smiled a little crooked smile. And she had thought—

SHE could not summon up enough courage to enter the ballroom until it was time for her to sing. It would be impossible to mingle freely with the guests, exchange pleasant banter, explain that she had been called away suddenly for a few days, see the coquettish laughter in the eyes of the women, hear the easy compliments of the men. Oh, no, that world was closed to her forever!

She heard the manager announce, "Miss Marilyn Fenton will now delight us with a rendition of—of her favorite song. I am sure you will agree with me that rarely has there been so happy a combination of beauty and talent. Miss Marilyn Fenton."

With quick, nervous steps she entered to a prolonged series of chords from the orchestra. She smiled bright-

ly at the assemblage. The manager took her elbow and walked with her to the piano.

The smile twisted on her face. Her heart stood still. Terry! She looked into his eyes.

"What song will you sing, Miss Fenton?" he asked.

"I don't—don't know. You—you choose it." Her voice was very shaky. Oh, how could she sing?

His fingers ran deftly through an assortment of sheet music. He held one up to her.

"Will this do?"

It was "No Matter What I Do, I Love You."

"This will do—beautifully," she murmured.

He played the opening bars. She waited, one hand on the piano, not glancing toward her audience.

His eyes met hers. They did not waver, did not leave hers.

> No matter what I do
> Remember I'll be true.
> No matter what I do—
> I—love—you.

She sang as though her heart would break. She sang to him. And as she sang the pain lifted from her voice, and joy entered it. For in a sudden indisputable rush of instinct, she knew that he was playing to her!

So, under cover of the brilliant room, of the attentive guests, under cover of the music, of the rhythm and the meaningful words—he called to her. And she answered.

On the last word, Marilyn ran hurriedly from the room. Polite applause followed her, but she did not hear it.

As she reached the porch strong arms caught her, and with sudden fierce intensity, in a sweep of hunger and great tenderness, Terry crushed her to him.

She clung to him, laughing, sobbing, panting.

"Oh, darling, and I thought I had lost you," he whispered, brokenly.

Her eyes yearned to his.

"Terry, never, never! Oh, how good to be with you again!"

"Marilyn, there is one thing I must know."

"Oh, about Jay? It meant nothing. Only Jay was rich and important and—"

"Bless your heart! Did you think I was a hotel band pianist? Did you ever hear of Terence Trevor Cooper?"

Had she? Who hadn't? Why—oh — but — how much more imposing three names were than just plain Terry Cooper!

"Well, I'm Terence Trevor Cooper, the third."

She felt giddy. Was this she—was this Terry?

"I wanted to prove to my parents that even a rich man's son can support himself if he wants to. And I love music. We'll do so much together, Marilyn. You'll marry me soon, darling?" His arms caught her to him again.

Outside, the moonlight was bright on the lake. The moon was yellow as honey. The sky was full of stars and the night was still.

"Terry, will you mind very much if I tell you I can't possibly get ready for marriage before to-morrow?"

She had a quick vision of what life would mean for them together — the comradeship — the fine understanding—music—nights under the stars—picnics—laughter—youth—love.

He caught her close again, as though he never meant to let her go. A long time they stood that way. The air was sweet with honeysuckle and magnolia.

A Real Life Romance

Cupid scored another victory over the cynics recently when an American heiress wed the man of her choice

By Dorothy Dayton

WOULD you propose to a young man? Some girls wouldn't, but Vivienne Huntington did. And as a result she is the ideal picture of a happy bride.

Of course, ordinarily, if a girl *has* to propose, the young man in question isn't worth proposing to. He either isn't sufficiently in love, or he's too bashful and lacking in nerve generally to prove a very good bet as a husband.

But sometimes there are barriers over which even true love has a hard time hurdling—barriers of parental objection, which have caused innumerable love tragedies since the days of Romeo and Juliet, barriers of poverty or riches, of class distinction and pride. In such cases a girl usually has to take a firm hand herself, especially if she is absolutely convinced that the man in question is the One Man, and that happiness can be found only with him.

In Vivienne Huntington's case romance seemed to be confronted with all of the barriers known to drama and fiction. Yet she had everything which some people think will bring happiness—money, clothes, travel, good looks, and all the parties any girl could want.

But never had she been fortunate enough to meet a man she could love, as she had dreamed of love. She was heiress to the huge estate of the late Charles Pratt Huntington of New York, although the money was held in trust by her mother.

Last summer Vivienne and her mother went to England to live in a palatial manor, Embrook Manor, in Cheriton.

A girl never knows on what day she is going to meet her love, and it usually happens when she least expects it. Vivienne was only thinking of love in the abstract when she stepped off the train at the Folkestone station. She was far too busily engaged thinking of the gay times she would have in England, the lords and ladies she would meet, and seeing after her luggage, which contained a perfectly immense wardrobe of new and lovely frocks she had just bought in Paris.

If she hadn't suddenly decided to buy a love story magazine it never would

have happened, probably. She bought it from a tall, handsome, blue-eyed young man who was tending the magazine and news-stand.

Vivienne already has forgotten what they said to each other in that short and simple transaction. Probably they didn't say anything except, "How much is this? Guess I'll take it." Yet this incident was to change the course of her entire life.

For curious things seemed to be happening to her heart; things that had never happened to it before at dances and parties. It seemed to catapult right into her throat, with the first look into the tall young man's eyes, and apparently the same thing happened to him. She had met many men just as handsome; he had seen many girls just as pretty. But here it was, the inexplicable miracle of love, which poets and philosophers have been trying to explain since the beginning of time.

At any rate, he got the change all wrong, which made him blush, and Vivienne, usually so self-possessed, dropped her magazine and change. He picked them up for her; that was all. But she dreamed about him that night, then thought herself very silly, and tried desperately to banish him from her thoughts.

She didn't see him after that for a while, but a trick of fate brought them together again. A simple little trick, like the mumps. For a fortnight later, when Vivienne, in a crisp pink linen frock, was on the lawn, whom should she see entering the front gate but the young man of the news-stand. He was delivering the papers for his younger brother, who had been taken ill.

She smiled at him, and he smiled, too, as any young man would at the vision of a pretty girl in a pink frock on a bright June morning standing beside a rose bush. But he didn't speak. It gave him something of a shock to discover that she was the little rich girl of the Manor. He could never marry a girl like that, he knew, but still, there was nothing to prevent him dreaming about her.

Every man likes to have an ideal girl. The more remote and unattainable she seems, the more beautiful and angelic she becomes in his imagination. Vivienne became for him something of a goddess. He could worship her at a distance, and catch a glimpse of her now and then when he delivered the papers.

Vivienne had no intention of falling in love with him, but she couldn't help being on the front lawn those June mornings. Her mother commented on her sudden love of early rising, and the extra care she gave her early morning toilet. But Vivienne smiled, and kept her own counsel.

Soon they began chatting a little at the door or on the lawn. They discovered they had many things in common —certain books, magazines, flowers, and sports. She found herself liking his conversation quite as much as she had liked his eyes. His manner was charming; he was evidently from a very nice family even if he was poor, she decided. And nobody could deny that he had an adorable smile. She decided that she would like to know him better.

The next morning, in her prettiest frock and large straw hat, she strolled along in the direction she knew he would take on his morning paper route. It was inevitable that he should overtake her; that the June morning suddenly should take on a new magic to both of them.

Never before had any June morning

seemed so beautiful. For Vivienne had discovered that most delightful thing about love—how seeing the ordinary things of life through another pair of eyes can somehow transfigure them, until one wonders if until that time one has gone about blind to the beauties of the world.

That morning she learned his name—Alfred Cecil Durban. A lovely name, she thought. He was working very hard, he told her, because he was ambitious, and wanted to go to Canada to take an engineering job. He might be poor now, but he was not always going to be poor.

Vivienne listened eagerly, wishing that she were a poor girl, who could work with him to make his fortune. That, she thought, would be much more fun than having a lot of money to spend, left by one's father.

"But I couldn't marry him," her mind said to her heart. "Why, the very idea is absurd. Mother wouldn't stand for it, and besides—well, I don't believe anybody should marry beneath them."

The happy bride and groom

Nevertheless, it was a pleasant idea to dream about, and she would sit by the hour picturing in her imagination life in Canada as Mrs. Alfred Cecil Durban. Through the June mornings the walks were continued. It was fun dodging people they knew. It was exciting, as secret romances always are.

Later, walking together along a hawthorn lane, under a full summer moon, they knew they were in love, and told each other so. Love, as usual, had won, in spite of them.

She told her mother about it next morning, but under the clear light of day it didn't seem romantic—at least to her mother.

"Nothing could be more foolish," she counselled. "Such marriages seldom turn out well. No man is happy who is living on his wife's money, and if he does it he isn't much of a man. And you, accustomed to everything that money will buy, would be miserable without it."

Vivienne's mind agreed that there might be truth in this, but her heart protested. "I'd be happy anywhere with Alfred," she insisted.

But that afternoon Alfred, to her surprise, agreed with her mother.

"I love you, and this has been the happiest summer of my life," he told her. "But I've always known I couldn't marry you; at least not until I've made a place for myself in the world. If I succeed, and you aren't married to anybody else, maybe some day— But I'll never forget you, Vivienne; never cease loving you."

For many months Vivienne tried to forget him. Her mother, thinking that her daughter had "come to her senses," went to Switzerland.

By April Alfred's savings account had grown to quite modest proportions. One day he met Vivienne unexpectedly in a country lane near the Manor.

"I'm going," he told her. "I'm going in about a week."

Vivienne gasped, her face a picture of dismay. She realized now that, regardless of everything, she loved him; that happiness was within reach of her slender fingers, but ready to slip from her grasp forever. The look of agony on his face as he tried to tell her goodby convinced her that he loved her just as much as she loved him.

All of her stanch pioneer ancestry asserted itself. Those forefathers of hers had got what they wanted through sheer determination and courage. There was Simon Huntington, the first to leave England, when the Puritans were persecuted. His grandson, Samuel, was president of the Continental Congress, a leader in the fight for freedom.

And there was Collis P. Huntington, her grandfather, who had girded a continent with iron and steel and had preached the dignity of beginning at the bottom.

"Alfred Durban, will you marry me?" she asked. "It's your last chance, and if you don't, I'll never speak to you again."

Well, what could a young man who loved a girl do when it was put to him like that? Go with her to the nearest registry office, of course, and make her Mrs. Durban. This he promptly did, and they spent two glorious weeks on the seashore.

By this time Vivienne's mother had rushed back from Switzerland. And like most mothers, she had a weak spot in her heart for such an example of true romance. She promptly gave them her blessing, and no prouder or happier couple ever set sail for a new land than Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Durban.

Love at a Glance

His fairy girl! As she poised there before the applauding multitude he knew an emotion that was never to die

By J. U. Giesy

THE long hooded car quivered into motion, rolled out of the driveway to the street. Wanda Lane watched it disappear before she turned back to the vine-covered porch of Tom Spencing's home. Tom was her sister Elizabeth's husband. Six years before they had married and come to Salt Lake City. And now with their two children they were off on a two weeks' trip to the Yellowstone.

Wanda sighed. She could have gone with them. But she had elected to remain behind and go on with her study of stenography and shorthand in a summer school. For Wanda was fitting herself for a business career.

She seated herself in one of the porch chairs and rocked with brooding eyes.

It was hot. There was a shimmer of heat on the pavement beyond the row of shade trees and the smooth green lawn. She began weaving mental pictures of the past.

A year before her father, with whom she had lived in Los Angeles

after Elizabeth's marriage, had died. Of all he had owned he had left next to nothing. And he had left Wanda, reared without education beyond that of a child of supposed wealth—alone. Betty and Tom had come to the rescue, invited her to share their home. And she had accepted the invitation, become their guest and a sort of nursemaid to the children.

It was all right in its way too—she was fortunate of course. But—she sighed again—it would be nicer when she could take a salaried position, earn some money of her own.

A vagrant breeze rustled the pages of a morning paper beside her chair. Tom had glanced at its headlines before leaving and thrown it down. She took it up in listless fashion, turning the sheets with no particular interest.

Yet after a time her eye hesitated and then fastened on the printed lines. It was a nice eye, deep blue under a creamy lid on which the lashes were long. Swiftly it conveyed the meaning of the words it scanned to Wanda's brain.

At Saltair, the bathing resort on the shores of the Great Salt Lake, there was to be a bathing revue two days later—a swimming race for women from the pavilion to Antelope Island, where some years before the buffalo hunt in the motion picture classic "The Covered Wagon" had been filmed. And the sporting goods houses were entering contestants in the revue. Any one could enter for either event or for both.

Wanda's red lips smiled. They were very pretty lips, full and ripe looking, kissable lips to tell the truth. In fact Wanda was a very pretty girl with those lips and a straight little nose and chestnut hair. And she could swim, had matched her strength with the surf of the Pacific many a time before the death of her father.

Her smile became a purposeful grin. On so warm a day there was something appealing in the thought of a three-mile swim in the great lake's limpid brine. Why not, she asked herself. Tom and Betty were gone for a fortnight. It would be fun.

She rose, entered the house and climbed the stairs to her room. Twenty minutes passed before she came down again, locked the door behind her and caught a bus for the center of town.

An hour later she was entered as one of the contenders for both contests, had even selected a trig little one-piece suit in the store of the company with which she was signed. It was blue and white—as blue as Wanda's eyes, as white as the flawless covering of her neck and tapering thighs and arms.

AND on the second day she wore the bathing suit to a victory in the revue that surprised her beyond measure, left her almost dazedly athrill from her red-brown hair to the tips of her pink little toes.

"Miss Wanda Lane!" The announcer's megaphone bellowed her name as winner.

"Go on, Miss Lane," the voice of a smiling master of ceremonies prompted.

Suddenly self conscious, Wanda followed directions slowly. She passed a doorway; descended some steps, mounted a little square platform high above a sea of faces, found her ears filled with the patter of applauding palms and—bowed.

Jeffry Rand caught his breath in an audible sound. He had reached the resort late that afternoon. Consequently he had not seen this girl whose selection as winner the audience was

approving, on her first appearance. But now—

"Wanda" meant fairy. And there was something fairylike indeed in the slender figure at which he was staring, with its blue and white silk sheathed body, its warm living flesh of graceful arms and limbs.

"Who is she?" he questioned a man who stood at his shoulder.

"Don't know, brother," that individual replied. "From Los Angeles, I hear. One of them sunkist California babies, I reckon." He grinned. "She's entered for the swim to the Island too, I understand."

"Yes?" Rand narrowed his eyes. Wanda Lane was withdrawing, descending from the little platform where she had so briefly posed. And all at once he was loath to see her go—to be robbed of the sight of her youth and beauty so soon.

But—if she were entered for the race to the Island also—the bathing privileges were public and he was a swimmer himself. It would be easy to rent a suit, float about till the race was starting, and then trail along—prove whether the hint of lithe strength and thoroughbred endurance in that alluring blue and white body was genuine or not.

He turned away, began breaking a way for himself through the crowd to the gates of the bathing pier. He provided himself with a suit and a key to a room. Ten minutes later he was afloat in the blue green water.

It was limpidly warm. He had never tried it before. It was like—soup, he decided. And then happening to catch a mouthful of it concluded further that if it were soup then the cook must have salted it with a far too generous hand! Somebody had told him it was twenty-two per cent salt, and he was ready to believe it as he choked, spat out the water that was actually burning his throat and swam slowly to where the racers were entering the lake and a motor boat was chattering in staccato fashion as it waited to follow them to the island now lying a thing of brown and tan and green hummocks beneath the cloudless afternoon sun.

Wanda—Wanda Lane. His eyes sought for and found her, a vision in blue and cream.

Then they were off! The launch barked sharply into motion.

Rand began to swim. Like a friendly shark he followed the dart of the blue and white little body, that advanced with a swiftness that presently piqued his pride. Because it gradually forced the consciousness upon him, that the girl was threatening to distance him as manifestly as she was distancing the other swimmers.

And—there was something the matter with the water. He had never swum in anything like it before. It was actually—heavy. And one couldn't very well use a crawl stroke because it was simply liquid brine. He frowned, fastened his eye on the rhythmic flash, flash, flash of a bare white arm, took his cue from it, changed his own stroke and gained a little, drove doggedly on.

Even so he was a good twenty yards behind her when Wanda finished and stood up, slender and victorious once more, a modern Aphrodite rising from the salt, salt waves of the inland sea, at the end of the longest three miles Rand had ever known. His feet found bottom and he waded toward her.

SHE reached the sand of the beach and turned, caught sight of him splashing shoreward, eyed him for a moment in apparent surprise, and then smiled.

Rand grinned. "Congratulations!" he called. This opportunity for a word with her alone was more than he had dared to hope for.

"Goodness!" Her smile widened, threatened to become a laugh. "Were you chasing me—all the way? I thought—"

"I was a perfect lady?" Rand took the words out of her mouth. "I'm—er—glad I'm not. That's not a discourtesy to your sex, Miss Lane. It's a heartfelt thanksgiving for the privilege of admiring it—as a man."

Her blue eyes were dancing. "I suppose I ought to say thanks for the congratulations and the compliment and for your acting as a sort of runner-up. You certainly drove me into using rather much all I had, Mr.—"

"Rand, Miss Lane—Jeffry Rand."

They were, actually getting acquainted. Rand's pulses began to pound. It was a nice day and it was getting nicer with every word from Wanda's rosy lips!

"Runner-up is right, I guess, though that really wasn't my intent. I'm surprised that I managed to finish second. That water is the most amazing stuff I've ever tried to swim in. It takes hold of you and holds on like—molasses. I felt like a fly on a sheet of sticky paper most of the time."

"Salt," Wanda explained and smiled again. "Swimming in it's a trick—a matter of form."

Rand nodded. Aside from any question of swimming he decided there was nothing the matter with her—form.

Her blue glance ran past him. "Here come the others," she announced.

Rand tore his glance from her long enough to witness the finish of the race. The other contestants arrived pretty much in a bunch. They were like a school of varicolored fish in the light of the westering sun. The motor boat chugged up behind them and stopped. They began clambering into it for the trip back to the pier. Miss Lane took a step toward the gently lapping water.

Rand spoke again. His luck had been in thus far and he had no intention of letting it run out without an effort. "I say, Miss Lane," he inquired as they splashed toward the waiting launch, "isn't there a café of a sort over there where we came from?"

"At the pavilion?" She gave him a fleeting glance.

"Yes." He nodded.

"Why, yes. It's a rather good one," she returned.

"Then have dinner with me when we get back, won't you?" Rand knew that he flushed. And he knew that the blue eyes that swept him as though marking his broad shoulders, his lean flanks, his brown hair and eyes and well turned chin must have noted the fact before their possessor answered:

"Why, yes, Mr. Rand, if you like."

"I would—very much," he declared in a tone that shattered all doubt as to the truth of the declaration. He helped her into the boat, found himself invited to a place aboard it, and seated himself at her side.

Jeffry whistled as he dressed and went out to wait for her at the exit close beside the little stall where photographs of the bathers, taken while in the water, were printed and sold. She was wonderful, wonderful, he told himself. And he had had the most wonderful luck in meeting her and—

She was coming toward him, as beautiful, as altogether charming, in her summer gown as in any other guise. He walked with a prideful step beside her, past beds of blooming flowers to the door of the café.

Dusk was falling as they took their

places. On Rand's right the day was dying in a wonderful play of colors, reds and yellows and pinks and gold and mauve, beneath which the ball of the sun was a glowing coal, sinking slowly into the waves.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" Wanda nodded to it. "They have the most gorgeous sunsets here."

"B e a u t i f u l—yes," Jeffry Rand assented, looking across the table rather than toward the west.

Gray and white gulls flitted past open windows. Wanda crumbled bread and tossed it to them. They swooped to catch it in mid-air, shrieking raucous thanks.

"Real gulls on an inland sea," said Rand.

"And tame as chickens," she agreed. "There's a law against killing them, you know, and a story about them." She told it—that story of the great grasshopper pest that had threatened death to the crops and starvation to the pioneers, the year the gulls first appeared. "There's a monument to them in Temple Square," she finished. "You're a stranger here, aren't you, Mr. Rand?"

"Well, yes." He nodded. "You see, I travel about a lot. I'm a—er—transportation engineer." Just why he said the last he hardly knew, except that this girl was very fair, with the manner of a person of education and refinement, and he wanted very much to appear as well as he might in her eyes. "You're from Los Angeles, Miss Lane, I understand?"

"Formerly." Wanda dropped easily into the small talk of casual association she had known so well when her father was alive, when, as to-night, she had frequently dined with some masculine escort. "Now I'm living with a married sister here."

She tossed the gulls more crumbs. There was something very attractive about this man Rand. She felt that she liked him. And this sitting at a little table, this feeling of his glance upon her in unmistakable approval was like old times.

LATER they danced on a great floor to the music of a splendid band—danced under a myriad of glowing lamps, beneath a huge artificial moon. Later still there was the restful sweep of the electric train.

"That was a wonderful swim you made this afternoon," Rand harked back to her performance as they rode homeward side by side. "I couldn't catch you. Almost, but never quite. Of course with practice maybe—"

"Yes-s?" She turned her blue glance to him. She was glowing, thrilling that night with the fires of youth, its confidence and strength, and—Betty and Tom would be gone two weeks, and Jeffry Rand liked her. She knew it as a woman always will. And he was really very nice. He was big, but not clumsy, strong but gentle in his manner.

"Think so?" she went on. "Well, I'll race you any time you care to take me on."

"Eh?" She saw him stiffen, noted his head upflung. And then his eyes were looking full into her own. "Just how do you mean?"

"Why—" she had spoken largely on impulse, but now she planned swiftly even as she answered: "Just you and I across to the island with time to rest before we start back—any time you say."

The two of them—just this fairy girl and himself—alone. The thought affected Rand like a draft of heady wine. "Done!" he said without any

hesitation, though in a somewhat thickened tone.

They planned it as the train sped on. Rand saw her to her door and waited till she found her latchkey. "A week from to-day, then," he said. "I'll call for you about two. That will give us plenty of time. And, in the meantime, how about dinner together to-morrow night?"

"Why—I'd love it," Wanda accepted. Rand was acting exactly as she had hoped he might. "As I've told you I'm a bachelor maid while my folks are gone."

As for Rand, the ensuing week was principally Wanda Lane. They dined on a hotel roof the following night and danced again. They took a motor and drove. He saw the intermountain metropolis with its wide tree-lined streets and the surrounding cañons with their ever-changing vistas of scenic beauty with a lovely girl for his guide.

And at half past two on the eighth day they climbed, laughing, aboard a Saltair train.

It was a muggy sort of day, such as sometimes comes to the valley of the Great Salt Lake in the summer, warm but with a hazy sky of a color between blue and dun.

Rand noted it on the outward run together with a rising wind. But not until the train swept about the final curve before darting out along the causeway that led to the pavilion did his companion see fit to remark the weather. Then: "A bit rougher than it was the other day," she said with a glance at the wind-whipped water on either hand.

"Yes." Rand nodded assent.

Wanda, however, made no further comment, and he followed her through the gates, headed for the bathing pier, accompanied her to her bathhouse and then sought his own.

She was ready almost as soon as he was and they hurried to the nearest stairway leading to the water. Halfway down Rand paused. "See here—hadn't I better arrange for a boat to follow?" he suggested. Some of the heavy, low running waves were beginning to be edged with foam. He was standing one step below her and he looked straight into her face, framed in its little rubber cap.

"Oh—I don't think so." She glanced past him to the island, half lost in a dun haze. There was a reckless quality about her that afternoon. Rand sensed it dimly as they stood. She was like—like a slender living flame, buoyantly vibrant, almost defiantly alive. And her next words carried out that last suggestion: "Not unless you're afraid."

"Not at all." Before that challenge to his manhood he set his lips and shook his head. "I was thinking of you," he said and slipped into the water.

"Of me?" Wanda laughed and floated at his side. "From now on you'd better think of—yourself. Don't forget this is a race. Come on!" Her arm flashed and she was off, as lithe, as graceful in action as a darting prismatic fish.

Jeffry Rand surged forward, matching her stroke for stroke, following, following, always following her slender silk sheathed shape.

AFTERWARD he knew he would never, *could* never forget that drive through the heavy water. Far off, low, seen only as the waves lifted him on their foam etched crests, the island showed. Nearer Wanda Lane led toward it, with a reach of

white arm, the lift of a white, white shoulder, a thrust of tapering thighs.

She was light as a cork. Strain as he would she was always just before him, glancing back now and then to

"Turn around?" he questioned.

"No. Get in the lee of the island. Swim!" She quickened her stroke and shot ahead.

Her judgment was sound, provided there was time to prove it, Rand decided as he surged forward in her wake.

But their margin of safety was too short. The storm — one of

"Shall I arrange for a boat?" "Not unless you're—afraid!"

where he labored, with a quirk half taunting, half of encouragement on her mouth. And with each minute the waves lifted them a trifle higher.

Till suddenly he was gaining on her —surprisingly she was falling back—was swimming beside him—was speaking: "I'm afraid we're in for a squall."

those quick bursts of wind and rain which sometimes drive the bathers into swift retreat to the pier—caught them still a trifle too far out.

Rand realized it with a sinking heart. But even so his thought was of Wanda first. Instinctively he glanced toward her, faltered in a stroke and—

a wave slapped him full in the face. It filled his eyes, his nose. He gasped and began to choke. His throat seemed suddenly filled with a liquid fire. He struggled for breath and strangled, threshing at the water with blinded, futile strokes.

And then soft arms laid hold upon him, held him up—a soft voice panted: "Roll over—Jeff—roll over—float! It's our—only—chance!"

Wanda! Her voice steadied Rand. She was beside him—his fairy girl—was supporting him with that splendid, brave young strength of hers. Girls were such wonderful things. By a vast effort he turned on his back, found himself floating, lifted, tossed, buffeted by the liquid death all about him, yet able to breathe, reasonably safe—so long as he and the girl beside him made of their bodies a sort of mutually sustaining, living raft.

"Oh, Jeff—I'm sorry. I was—a fool!" Wanda faltered as they clung together.

"Never mind," he choked and meant it. For the second time she had called him "Jeff," this wonderful embodiment of the best life might hold for a man—this wonderful, wonderful fairy girl he loved. For he knew now that he loved her, admitted it to himself, and gloried in the realization that no matter what happened he would love her, love her, love her to the death. "Wanda?" he gasped.

"If I'd only let you get—a boat or—called it off. I ought to have known better. I did know better—really—" He caught her wind-whipped words.

"Never mind," he said again. She was so sweet, so sweet. He drew a longer, deeper breath. He could do it now, he discovered. The first suffocating effects of the brine in his nose and throat had passed. If he could only take her in his arms, he thought, and promised himself that he would at the last—if the worst came to the worst. But not now—not as long as there was a chance for life—with her. "Wanda," he questioned, "are you tired?"

"Not—much—Jeff," she answered simply.

"Then—let's make a battle for it. I think I can swim again—now. Let's try." He looked into her dear blue eyes.

They did not falter—would never falter, as he realized.

"Come," he said, and released her hand, rolled over and struck out.

AFTER that, for how long a time he never knew, they swam together in a smother of wind and rain-whipped spume. Side by side. If they lived it would always be side by side now—must be, he told himself. Side by side forever, while life lasted—side by side for the last, long sleep that came afterward. Rand fitted the words to the weary reach and pull of his arms, the heavy kick of his legs. Side by side— Side by side—

Then he swam alone! Wanda had disappeared—was gone! He could not see her! Or—no—there she was—behind him—*behind* him! Yet she had made no sound—had said no word. She was sinking without outcry—without calling upon *his* strength.

His heart throbbed to breaking, with that knowledge. Girls were—such wonderful things—the most wonderful things in all the world. With a strength born of desperation he reached her, seized her, rolled on his back and sought to drag her body across his, sank lower and lower with the effort and—found his man's soul humbled in a great thanksgiving.

His feet had touched bottom! They sought for it again and found it and clung. He struggled up with the fairy girl shape in his arms, turned, and staggered shoreward, bearing her against a sobbing breast. So in the end he stumbled, half blinded, ashore and laid her on the sand.

"Wanda—Wanda, darling!" He knelt beside her, his fingers seeking numbly for the beating of her heart. "Wanda—sweetheart! Oh, girl, I love you. Oh, Wanda—fairy girl—Wanda!" In a passion of despair he lifted her head and shoulders and kissed the salt wet loveliness of her mouth.

"Hey! Ain't you fools got no sense?" The words were harshly contemptuous. But Rand gave their tone no heed. He lifted salt reddened eyes and stared unbelievingly at a man on a horse.

He was a young man, little more than a boy, clad in worn khaki breeches, a shirt and high laced boots.

"Ain't dead, is she, mister?" he went on, as Rand lifted his face.

"Dead?" Jeffry repeated sharply. "I—don't know. She—can't be. God!"

"Lessee." The youth dismounted, knelt on the other side of the silk filmed body, laid a practical ear to the soft mound of its breast, lifted it, nodded and grinned. "Not so you could notice it, yet. Say, mister, can you ride?"

"Yes!" Rand very nearly shouted it in the grip of a vast relief. He wanted to shout—to laugh. After all, it was a wonderful, wonderful world in which Wanda Lane still lived!

"Then get on that horse," the youth directed. "Now here—take her." He bent and swung the graceful body up to Rand's waiting arms, laid hold of a stirrup leather. "Hi, John—beat it! Git along!"

John, Rand judged, was the horse. At least it saw fit to respond. It pivoted with a suddenness that nearly unseated its new rider, broke into a reaching trot. Beside it the younger man trotted also. "Old Spanish custom," he remarked with the careless insouciance of youth.

Rand made no answer. He was too busy holding on, holding Wanda's limp little body against his heart. At another time he might have laughed at the picture he made in a bathing suit, astride the rangy horse. But he didn't feel like laughing then, nor even after his heaven-sent ally had guided him to a well built ranch house, and he had seen Wanda given over to the ministering hands of a wide-eyed, sympathizing woman, had listened to the as yet unknown youth's announcement: "Coupla dumb-bells, who tried to swim over to the island. I saw 'em just before they come ashore an' was goin' to ride out after 'em. Girl was pretty near gone."

"You mean you were going to ride into the lake to help us?" Rand questioned.

"Sure!" The island boy eyed him. "Why not? I was huntin' for some stray steers from our herd. 'Fraid the buffalo bulls mighta got 'em. But"—he grinned again—"they wasn't the strays I found."

"Thanks, my friend." Jeffry thrust out a hand. "It was a near thing for us. My name's Rand."

"Mine's Thornborg," the youth said as he took the proffered palm. "All right. Mr. Rand, you come with me till I see what I can find for you to put on. An' don't worry about your girl. Ma's a wow with sick folks. She'll bring her around.

"We only live here springs and summers and falls," he explained as Rand sluiced off the salt that had crusted on his face and body. "We graze our herd on the range—what's left by the cock-eyed buffaloes. Winters we spend in town, an' run over here in a motor boat to look after the stock. After dinner I guess I'd better scoot over to Saltair an' bring back your clothes. If you'll write a note so they'll let me have yours an' hers—"

"With the greatest pleasure in the world," Rand assented. "I'll give you an order for them and the watch and purse I left in the check room too."

"All right." Thornborg nodded. "I'll get 'em right after supper."

THE storm blew itself out as suddenly as it had started. Later the sun sank in a riot of reds and blues and gold. Later still there was a moon, and Wanda—a pale little Wanda—none too steady, but rallying fast with the quick resiliency of youth.

Rand led her outside the ranch house. And now at last he smiled. He was wearing a flannel shirt and overalls and a pair of battered old shoes. And Wanda was clad in one of mother Thornborg's dresses. Seen so they might almost have passed for two of the troupe which some summers before had helped in the filming of the moving picture classic on this very island.

Rand, however, gave such details no more than a passing consideration.

"Beautiful, isn't it, darling?" he spoke to the girl at his side.

"Yes." She nodded.

The moon was silvering all the island, its low hills; was caught between the latter like molten silver in a cup. Far off across the water where Thornborg had gone to return with their personal apparel the great pavilion glowed, etched on a blue black background in golden lights. To the east the Wasatch Mountains showed as a blue and white, snow touched glory. "It's—like fairyland, Jeff," she said. And her voice was soft, little more than a whisper in her throat.

Like—fairyland. And her name meant fairy. Rand half caught his breath at the thought. Because she was very, very fair—this girl he loved, there beside him in the moonlight—very, very fair with her sweet, white face and her low voiced words, little stronger than those of some witching sprite.

"Wanda," he said, "back there—this afternoon—when you tired and couldn't keep on, why didn't you call me?"

She did not answer at once. And then she said very simply, very frankly:

"Because it was all my fault really, Jeff. And—I thought—I hoped you could—make it—alone."

"Alone!" he repeated, and caught her swiftly to his heart. "I thought as much. But—listen, sweetheart—did you think I'd want to do that? Oh, my dear, my dear, don't you know how very much alone I'd have been forever afterward? Wanda—this afternoon when I thought you might be—dead—that I'd been too late in getting to you, I kissed you—told you that I loved you. And now—I'm going to tell you—kiss you—again, my darling."

"No, Jeff. Wait. Not till I tell you," she stayed him. And then she told him everything about herself, about Tom and Betty and the children. "I'm living with them, Jeff, because I haven't any other home. I'm—just a—sort of—servant girl by marriage," she came to a pause at length with a catching little laugh.

Rand's arms tightened about her. "As though I cared what you are—except just yourself," he said. "But—listen, sweet, I told you I was a transportation engineer, didn't I—right after I met you? Those are big sounding words, aren't they? I used them because—well, because I wanted to seem a little bit bigger to you than I really am, I guess. But now that we're here together—just you and I—it isn't any longer a question of just seeming. It's just a question of—truth. I'm not a transportation engineer, dear, really. I'm just a factory expert for an automobile concern, who goes about the country advising local distributors on puzzling mechanical points. And yet you're the fairy princess and I'm the prince out here in the magic moonlight. And while my salary isn't as large as that of a transportation engineer might be, it's large enough to take care of—a wife."

"Jeff!" She lifted her lips. Her arms crept up and lay about his neck.

"What made you—first?" she questioned after minutes had passed.

"Love you—you—darling?" Rand's voice was very tender.

"Uhuh." She nodded.

"Why, fairy," he laughed as he held her, "I think it was a good deal like what you told me about trying to swim in this infernal water. When I looked up and saw you that afternoon, in that little blue and white suit you were wearing—it was a—matter of form. I—"

"Jeff!" she cried and cut off his further words with the living softness of her mouth.

Content

MY heart was the heart of a gypsy,
I wanted the salt of seas;
I wanted the strand of an alien land,
And the kiss of a South Sea breeze.
My soul was the soul of a rover,
When the heavens above were blue,
But I sat by the door when the day was o'er
And waited and watched for you.

My heart was the heart of a drifter,
I wanted no land in fee,
But the world my own, with its trails unknown
To beckon and call to me.
My soul was the soul of a nomad,
Their blood in my veins ran blue.
But I bent my staff, to a cup, to quaff
A toast unto love and you.

—*Rena Stotenburg Travais*

"Go!" he ordered, "and never molest this girl again"

The Green-Eyed Monster

Like thorns about a rose, hate hemmed her in. Would love find the way?

By Isobel Lovering

JULY sunshine, hot and sweet; wandering breezes heavy with the scent of flowers. Sweet Brier was a beautiful old place, with its great trees, wide, green lawns and silvery glimpses of the lake beyond. The Village Inn was pretentious, but uncomfortable. Gerald Greenough, unavoidably detained in Beaverbrook, felt very grateful to Beatrice Waddington for telling him that she was his cousin and inviting him to become her guest. His machine, badly disabled by a collision, must keep him two days more at Beaverbrook—and there was nothing on earth to do in the place.

True, he could not recall ever having heard of the great-great Maria, who was supposed to be the connecting link of relationship between them. Beatrice had told him that he was her cousin, and at the moment he was delighted to believe it. Beatrice had looked dainty and feminine in her flowered chiffon and wide brimmed hat, and if the eyes underneath the brim were pale, and the carefully powdered nose was rather thick, Gerald was not inclined to be critical. He had accepted her proffered hospitality at once and without question.

FROM an upper window of the fine old Waddington house, Beatrice, watching, saw the motor turn the curve of the drive, and ran down to the veranda where her sister Isobel sat, playing with a bit of embroidery. Isobel imagined that it gave her a feminine effect.

"He's coming," she cried excitedly. "He's coming!"

Isobel looked up languidly. "Does he prefer blondes or brunettes?"

Isobel was a rather too plump brunette. Beatrice a decidedly too pale blonde.

Beatrice's pale eyes narrowed. "Play fair, Isobel Waddington. Remember it was I who found him."

"Nonsense," retorted Isobel. "Didn't I come home and tell you of the tall, distinguished young man I saw coming out of the post office this morning? And didn't I tell you that when he saw me he stopped almost stock still in the street as if he were trying to think of an excuse to speak to me?"

Beatrice tossed her head. "And who was it looked through the register at the inn and found his name, and remembered that we had cousins by the name of Greenough? Who sent him a little note and managed the entire scheme of the visit, eh?"

Isobel would have retorted, but at that moment the motor turned the last curve and arrived at the foot of the steps. Both girls, wearing their sweetest smiles, arose and stood waiting to receive their guest.

Gerald Greenough was, indeed, a distinguished looking young man. Small wonder that he had created rivalry in feminine breasts. Tall, broad shouldered, athletic, there was yet something indolent about his movements. His blue eyes had a cool, roving habit, but his chin and jaw were strong, and the firm lines of his mouth were as beautiful as a woman's.

"So good of you—so more than kind," he murmured as he came up the steps.

"Will you go to your room at once, or would you like to have some iced tea first on the veranda?" asked Isobel when Beatrice had introduced her.

"Iced tea first," he replied promptly, with his flashing smile.

Beatrice and Isobel covertly considered the handsome youth now seated in a comfortable wicker veranda chair, each claiming him as her property. Gerald meantime was thinking that Beatrice and Isobel were very hospitable, nice girls. Not much to look at, either of them, but being young and heart free, he was prepared to be agreeable to both.

After half an hour's chat, and the consumption of much iced tea and cake, Gerald rose, saying that he would like to unpack his valise and write a letter made necessary by the delay in his journey.

Beatrice rose immediately. "I will show you the way to your room," she said.

An angry light shone in Isobel's eyes. "What—with your sprained ankle!" she exclaimed in surprise. "You had better let me go, dear—or ring for Cummings."

Beatrice laughed with affected gayety. "Oh, my ankle is much better," she said. "No, really, I insist upon going myself." And before the more slow moving, slow thinking Isobel could protest, Beatrice was leading the way up the wide carved staircase to the floor above.

"I am putting you in the north chamber," she said; "it overlooks the lake and the garden, and is a cooler summer room than the guest chamber on the front."

"I shall be in paradise wherever you put me in this beautiful old house," laughed Gerald.

"He is falling in love with me already," thought Beatrice triumphantly.

Gerald went at once to the window and looked down into the cool, fragrant garden from which the scent of a hundred flowers rose to greet him. Then as he turned to express his appreciation again to Beatrice, his eyes fell upon a picture over the mantel.

"What a wonderful face!" he exclaimed, and crossed the room to examine it.

IT was the portrait of a young woman with reddish hair. But its charm was not to be readily described, for it was something more than the loveliness of perfect features and red-blond coloring. A soul looked out of the deep eyes, and the capacity for strong emotion—perhaps even rash impulsiveness—was written upon the tender curves of the mouth.

"Do you like it? It is a picture of my Aunt Alicia," said Beatrice. "She is dead."

When she saw the shadow of disappointment upon the young man's face a mixture of malicious triumph and anger darkened her pale eyes.

"How sad," he said, turning from the picture with an involuntary sigh, "that so much loveliness should be lost. Beauty such as hers should be immortal."

"It need not have been lost so soon if she had not been a person of rather low tastes," said Beatrice with a slightly acid smile.

"Impossible!" cried Gerald. "A girl with that face could not possibly have low tastes."

"Well, she eloped with her riding master," said Beatrice, "and was, in consequence, very poor and wretched. She died a year later when her child was born."

"And the child?" Gerald asked as he turned away.

"The child was well brought up by the family—thanks to my mother," said Beatrice shortly. "She is the family skeleton."

Gerald smiled. "But it is the fashion to be a skeleton. Hasn't she inherited her mother's beauty?"

"Beauty!" exclaimed Beatrice angrily. "She is a beast. We call her the Monster."

Gerald's eyes returned to the portrait. "Surely that beautiful creature could not have had a child ugly enough to be called a beast and a monster!"

"She is anything but beautiful," replied Beatrice sharply. "Her eyes are positively repulsive. They are as green as a cat's."

"'The green-eyed monster,'" quoted Gerald. "I suppose that is how she came by her name."

"You've guessed it," said Beatrice. "But what a tiresome subject we have chanced upon. I will leave you to

write your letter. You will find paper in the desk by the window, and if you feel like taking a stroll in the garden, this staircase leads down to a side door that opens on the rose garden. Consider yourself at home, Cousin Gerald."

"I suspected that I was in paradise—now I know it!" laughed the young man. "How can I ever thank you?"

Beatrice went downstairs highly elated. The young man's last remark had quite blotted out the unpleasant impression made by his admiration of the picture.

Isobel looked up with a frown as she returned to the porch.

"How long you were! What were you talking about all that time?"

"Oh, why," Beatrice smiled tantalizingly, "part of the time he was saying pretty things to me, and part of it he devoted to gushing over the portrait of the Monster's mother."

Isobel's frown deepened. "We should take the picture down," she said. "Every one who goes in that room speaks of it."

"The portrait is harmless enough," returned Beatrice dryly. "Alicia is dead and done for. The thing we want to get rid of is the Monster herself."

"And how about the money?" inquired Isobel.

MEANWHILE Gerald Greenough sat at his window, staring into the riotous color of the garden. The languor of the summer afternoon, the sweet, heavy scent of the flowers, seemed to steal into his blood. He did not feel like writing to his sister. Again and again his eyes were drawn to the portrait of the beautiful but unhappy Alicia. It seemed to cast a spell over him. He felt that the wistfully pathetic eyes were looking straight into his. Finally, unable to shake off the influence of the pictured face, he rose and went up to the portrait.

What lips, what eyes, what a woman! It shot through Gerald's mind—care-free, heart-free as he was—that a man might love a woman like that in some wild and desperate manner of loving such as he had never before believed possible... Why, a man would go to his death gladly for the love of that face.

Then it came to him with a pang that beautiful Alicia was dead—out of the reach of lovers and loving . . . Strange that the daughter should not have inherited the mother's beauty. She was even ugly, so ugly that they called her the Monster... And the mother, with eyes and lips formed for love—lovely Alicia, was no longer on earth to be loved...

He was roused from his dreaming by a cry in a girl's voice: "No, no! Don't touch me — let me go — I hate you!"

As he hurried back to the open window he saw a young girl run swiftly through the garden toward the lake. She was bareheaded, and as she passed her loosened hair blew out in a cloud of reddish gold that caught the sunlight. She ran to the very edge of the water, jumped into a light cedar rowboat moored to a tree, tore the rope loose and pushed off. Standing in the boat, she used her oar like a paddle.

At the very moment that she cleared the shore a half grown boy, evidently in pursuit of her, ran up to the brink. A few feet from the shore the boat struck some obstacle in the shallow water and came to a standstill. The boy made a motion as if to step into the water, then hesitated, watching his

quarry. The girl, still standing up in the delicately balanced boat, pushed desperately. Suddenly freeing itself, the boat darted forward with such suddenness that the girl lost her balance and fell sideways. The frail craft, narrow as a canoe, capsized instantly.

What a beautiful face! He could not take his eyes from it

It took Gerald Greenough less than a minute to run down the stairway Beatrice had pointed out, leading from the balcony to the garden. He saw that the water of the little lake at the point the boat had capsized was deep. The girl was clinging desperately to the overturned craft. On the shore a sullen-looking, dark-skinned boy stood watching her with an irresolute frightened face.

Gerald flung off his coat and plunged in. In a second he reached the girl, seized her under both arms, and started back to the shore. Within a few feet of the edge he picked her up in his arms.

"Don't leave me with Eduardo," she implored, looking up at him. "He was trying to kiss me. I hate him!"

Gerald looked down into the girl's face and started violently. His heart missed a beat, his eyes remained fixed—for the girl in his arms had the face of the woman in the picture!

HE was roused by the tightening of slender fingers on his arm and moved toward the shore.

"Don't be afraid, I'll get rid of Eduardo," he assured her. The next moment he reached dry land and released her. She stood wringing the water from her cotton skirt, intent upon her task. Gerald caught the passionate

flash in the dark boy's eyes as he watched her. "Out of the way, young man. Leave this girl alone or I'll thrash you within an inch of your life," he said, and looking into the stern face of the broad-shouldered man towering above him, Eduardo decided to do as he was asked.

"Who is he? Does he belong on the place?" he asked the young girl who was looking at him with gratitude in her lovely eyes.

She shook her head. "He is a South American. He is visiting some people in the village. He has almost driven me crazy. He comes here all the time."

Gerald gave the girl a long look. "I dare say it is you who have first driven him crazy," he said.

And, indeed, it was a face to play havoc with a man's imagination.

Hair of the brightest red gold, shadowed eyes of a curious blue-green; her cheek had the creamy hue of a tea rose, and her red lips were temptation incarnate. A child's mouth slightly parted, for the curved upper lip was short. Yet a woman's mouth, for the lower lip, red and full, showed a capacity for feeling of which the girl herself was probably not yet aware.

As her eyes met the young man's intent stare an exquisite color flooded her face and she turned aside. "Come into the summer house," she said. "If Beatrice sees me like this, she'll lock me in my room for a week!"

Gerald's expression became grave. "Surely you are joking," he said. "No one locks girls up to-day."

She gave him a laughing backward glance, showing white even teeth. "Don't they!" she cried. "You don't know old Beatrice!"

With a very serious face Gerald followed the girl into the summer house. "You surely must be the daughter of the lovely girl whose portrait hangs over the mantel in my room," he said.

The girl nodded.

"Tell me all about yourself, please. What is your name?"

The girl laughed again. "Hasn't Beatrice told you? I am the Monster." She looked straight into his eyes, and it seemed to the man that that glance sent an electric needle into his heart. "The green-eyed monster," she added. "Isn't it horrid of old Beatrice? I can't help it, can I, if my eyes are green?"

Gerald moved nearer to her, his breath coming quickly. "You can't help it that you are the most beautiful human being in the world," he said. The girl's eyes fell, her color rose again. She moved restlessly, then stood up.

"I—I think I'd better go to my room."

"How thoughtless I am—you are all wet!"

"Oh, I don't mind that," she answered, laughing, her eyes on the ground. "In this heat it's rather nice to be wet. And really I am almost dry."

"Then sit down," the young man urged in a low voice. "I want to talk to you. Tell me your name."

The girl sat down. "My mother called me April," she said, "because I was born in that month. I don't remember her, of course. She died soon after I was born. After her death my father shot himself." She looked up and sent another thrilling dart into the blue eyes fixed intently on her face. "He loved her so much that he wouldn't live after she was gone. He just lay down beside her and took her in his arms and shot himself. Not many men love a woman as much as that, do they?"

"I hope not," said Gerald gravely. "Few women have the power to create such love."

"I don't mind what Beatrice and Isobel say to me," the girl went on. "But it hurts me terribly the way they speak about my parents. My mother was the youngest, so she wasn't much older than Isobel. Isobel's thirty-five, although she calls it twenty-five. My father was only a riding master in this country, but in Sweden he was a gentleman of high position. He was reckless, and gambled and lost money, and his father sent him to America, and he did the only thing he knew how to do to support himself."

"You said your cousins locked you up in your room. You don't seriously mean that? Surely they wouldn't dare do such a thing to you."

THE girl looked at him calmly, her beryl-green eyes roving over his face, and it seemed to Gerald Greenough that that cool glance burned.

"Locking me in my room is a very mild punishment, indeed," said April. "Until I grew big enough to defend myself, Beatrice used to beat me until there were great welts—"

Gerald put out his hand. "Don't, don't," he said. "I can't hear it. You poor child! Why haven't you left them? Is there no one you could go to?"

"I have thought of running away," said April, "but I don't know where to go. I am only seventeen, and I haven't any money. I don't know what I could do to earn my living. They haven't let me have any education, except just enough to teach me to read and write." She smiled. "But don't think I am altogether ignorant. My grandfather had a wonderful library in there"—she pointed to the east side of the house—"and for a wonder they have not tried to keep me from reading. But they never let me go anywhere, and I have to wear their old clothes." She looked up at him wistfully. "I suppose it's foolish, but I *do* so want to have pretty new things that are the fashion, like other girls."

"April, little April," cried Gerald huskily, "you shall have them. But don't you know, whatever you wear, you are the most beautiful child in the world? I have never seen any one like you."

Again the lovely color flooded the young girl's face, and her dark lashes fell, covering her strange green eyes.

"I thought if I could stand it another year I might be able to get hold of some of my own money," she said.

"You mean they are holding back money that belongs to you?" Gerald exclaimed.

She nodded. "My mother was my grandfather's favorite. He left most of his fortune to her—and in trust for me. But, of course, I can't claim it until I am eighteen."

"But you have a right to an income—what they call maintenance," said Gerald.

April laughed, a light-hearted, girlish laugh. "They never give me a cent," she said. "I have never had a penny in my life, except what old James, the gardener, has given me. He loved my mother so. It would hurt his feelings if I refused it." She looked up to meet the pained darkness in the man's eyes and hastened to reassure him. "Oh, it isn't so bad as it sounds," she said. "Half of the year Beatrice and Isobel are away in New York, and I have a lovely time outdoors all day long."

Gerald Greenough bent nearer.

"You are happy, just playing outdoors like a child?" he asked in a low voice. "You have never wanted anything—any one—else?"

Again the lovely color dyed her cheeks. She glanced into his eyes, then looked away. "Last spring," she admitted, "when the flowers began to come out and the air was soft—and at times this summer when I sat reading I felt lonely sometimes—and restless."

He came nearer. "In the books you read are there no stories of love? Have you never wished that some strong lover would come to you and carry you off in his arms—away from Isobel and Beatrice, to happiness?"

NOW April's great eyes did not fall, but remained staring into his as if unable to tear themselves away from the strange thing they read in the face of the man only a few hours ago a stranger.

"Lovely April," he murmured, "a great love brought you into the world, and a great love springs into life at the sight of you. There—don't shrink away from me. I didn't mean to startle you. But it is true. Half an hour ago I had not seen you, I did not know you were in the world. Now you hold my heart, my life, my soul, within your slender hands." He reached for one of her hands. She did not deny him. Her lashes hid her eyes, but he saw her bosom rise with her uneven breath. "It is not just that you are beautiful," the man went on; "beauty alone could not knock a man over like this. I have seen beautiful girls and passed them by. But you — are different. There is a spirit breathing from you that is what perfume is to a flower. That is the thing I love."

She drew her hand from his and looked away.

"I have frightened you," he said; "but don't run away. I have something to say to you first."

She turned and looked at him, her great eyes dark, her breathing tumultuous.

"Do you dislike me, April? Am I hateful to you—like Eduardo?"

She shook her head, nervously twining and untwining her fingers.

"Did you mind — when I touched you?"

She looked up at him and slowly shook her head, her red lips parted. She was only a child who had known nothing but a child's straightforward simplicity, and she had inherited the wild and reckless capacity for loving that had been her parents' happiness and their tragedy.

"When you carried me from the water to the bank I felt how strong you were," she said in her clear young voice. "I looked up into your eyes and saw that they were blue. And I saw that you were strong and handsome and brave like Lancelot."

"Lancelot," he stammered, unspeakably thrilled by this confession.

"Lancelot, King Arthur's knight who loved Guinevere," she said. "You know Elaine loved him, too. She loved him so much that she died when he went away and left her. And it came to me when I looked up into your face, that Lancelot must have looked like you. And I wondered if, perhaps—some day — I might die of love like that—like Elaine and like my father."

"April," cried Gerald, fairly overcome by the strong emotions that swept him, "you are so young—I don't want to take advantage of your youth, your inexperience. But I love you so. I love you as your father loved your mother. No one ever loved a woman as I love you—"

He saw that she trembled exceedingly, but the eyes like the sea, looked straight into his though she did not speak.

"Little April, let me take you away from here. Let me make you my wife." He came nearer, he saw her full under lip tremble, but her eyes did not falter. He took her in his arms. She trembled a little, but she did not draw back. Very slowly, very gently he drew her close and kissed her lips.

After a moment she drew back and looked at him. "My knight," she said softly. "My Lancelot. I shall always love you—always, always."

From the clear look of those young eyes the man half closed his own as from too strong a light. "God keep me from loving you too much," he whispered.

She crept back into his arms. "*Can* one love too much?" she whispered.

"When one loves too much one fears loss, little April."

A HARSH voice, rasped with jealous hatred, roused them from their dream of love. "You shameless girl! What has happened to you? Your skirt all wet and clinging to your body! Go to your room at once."

The lovers drew apart, but Gerald still held April's hand. "Already at your mother's tricks," Beatrice said. "How can I apologize to you, Gerald, for the boldness of this unhappy girl? She is man crazy, like her mother."

Gerald turned and looked at Beatrice for a moment without speaking. His slight smile was disconcerting.

"The other way about, I should say. April, like her mother, is the sort of girl who makes men crazy with love."

Beatrice's face was contorted with rage unspeakable. "Oh, I don't doubt she'll go to any length," she began, then stopped suddenly at the sight of Gerald's face.

"Hold that vile, slanderous tongue, Beatrice Waddington," he sternly commanded. "You are speaking of the girl who is very shortly to become my wife."

"Your *wife!*" screamed Beatrice. "No, you don't, my fine fortune hunter! You can't marry her without her guardian's consent. She's under age—and *I* am her guardian."

"Poor child!" murmured Gerald. "Poor child! But I know a way to win that guardian's consent."

"You're after her money," shrilled Beatrice.

Gerald looked faintly amused. "As it happens, I have plenty of my own. But don't you think *you* have enjoyed April's fortune long enough?"

"I am executor," replied Beatrice, her pale eyes alight with triumph, "as well as guardian."

"Oh, well, of course, if you have been an honest executor you have nothing to fear from investigation," returned Gerald carelessly. He drew April closer, his hand resting upon her red gold hair.

Beatrice started and reached out to a pillar of the summer house for support. Fear blanched her cruel face.

"An investigation," she whispered with dry lips. Then summoning her fierce will to her aid, she made a last effort at defiance. "I have no reason to be afraid of investigation," she said.

"No? Then your face belies you. Of course you know—embezzlement, and abuse of a minor in your care are both prison offenses in this State."

"*Prison!*" Beatrice gave a wild look behind her, as though already she felt the strong grip of the law upon her shoulders.

Gerald smiled. "Take fifteen minutes to think it over. If you show reason, I will deal gently with you, because through you I have found my April. Did I not tell you, half an hour ago, that you had led me into paradise?"

Beatrice looked at him with the eyes of a trapped beast. "What do you mean by showing reason? You are begging me to give my consent to the marriage, is that it?"

"'Begging?' Hardly that. I'm telling you — as gently as possible— that I will not have you prosecuted for embezzlement, or put on trial for beating and starving your charge, if you will control your temper and give your official consent as April's guardian to our immediate marriage."

"Blackmail!" she flung at him.

Gerald laughed and glanced at his wrist watch. "Five minutes," he reminded her.

"Oh, *take* her, *take* her! I wish you joy of her!" cried Beatrice savagely. "You'll soon be sick of your bargain." And turning sharply, the furious woman left the two lovers together.

Gerald's arms tightened about the lovely child in his arms. She was looking up into his eyes, her own dark with pain and fear.

"Gerald, my knight," she whispered, "what if you *should* get tired of me—wish you hadn't married me? I should die, oh, I should die!"

"Tired of you!" he whispered. "It isn't conceivable."

Minutes that were hours—or were they only hours that passed as minutes?—in which two stood locked in each other's arms as one. Whose the throbbing blood pulse, whose the beating heart? Surely two had never loved like this before. The striking of a distant clock roused the man. Reluctantly he began to put her from him.

"Four o'clock," he counted. "I can't bear to let you go, but there's a lot to be done before six." His hand passed tenderly over her. "I suppose a wedding gown should be *dry* at least."

April's laugh was like a chime of bells. "It is almost dry," she said; "but it's only blue gingham. Aren't brides always married in white? I've got a white muslin in my room. I'll put that on."

"I'll have a taxi from the inn here in ten minutes. Can you be ready as soon as that? Will you vanish if I let you out of my sight?"

"I'll be ready. I promise not to vanish," she replied, and slowly withdrew herself from his arms. But he drew her back again.

"One more kiss," he said. "It is our first parting."

She took his face between her hands. "May it be our last," she whispered, and again the electric contact of her lips on his annihilated time and space.

BETTY-LOU'S LOVE QUEST

The Picture on the Cover

PART II

One Magic Moment

CYNICS will tell you that there's no such thing as love at first sight, but Don and Betty-Lou know better. They know that Love born in the first meeting of a stranger's eyes can be as real and steadfast and enduring as any other kind. At least, Don does, and is willing to admit it, but Betty-Lou, like Tar Baby, "ain't sayin' nuffin'." Betty-Lou looks like an innocent baby, but she is wise with the wisdom of the Serpent of the Nile. She knows the Secret that the Wise Women learned when all the competition set it—that the way to make a man keep on wondering about you is to make him wonder.

Don fell head over heels in love with Betty-Lou in the Pullman, you remember, the day she started on her vacation. He hadn't been going her way at all, but he made it his business to find out her destination from the porter, and he changed his plans to suit. So he, too, came to Hawxhurst-on-the-Sound, and put up at the hotel where Betty-Lou, who had taken a room in a cottage, would have to eat her meals. All the mail is delivered at the hotel, too, and every morning, as Betty-Lou eats her breakfast, he sees her smiling over a fat letter written in violently purple ink in a sprawling mannish hand.

Don might be jealous if he hadn't overheard a little conversation before the train left between Betty-Lou and the office boy, Tommy. He strongly suspects that Tommy, and nobody else but, wrote those letters. They look like Tommy, somehow.

Not that Don hasn't the right to ask Betty-Lou about them by this time. He and she are pretty good friends already. A vacation acquaintance, like a shipboard one, is quickly formed, and quickly becomes full-grown.

They lunch and dine together; every hour of the day and many of the evening ones are spent in each other's company. On the tennis courts, on the beach, in the surf, in the ballroom, always, always together. And Don has never yet been able to decide just when he finds Betty-Lou most bewitching. Every costume in which she arrays herself is so perfect.

Look at her to-night, perched on the wide rail of the veranda in her little dance frock. It is made of chiffon in

a gorgeous shade of American beauty (what could be more fitting?) that reminds you of a soap bubble; it comes in tight around her slim waist and hips, then billows to her tiny feet in their satin slippers.

Don hasn't an idea that Betty-Lou spent more than a week's salary on those slippers. He does not dream that the quantity of a shoe makes no difference in the price.

Oh, bless the man who brought back femininity to girls, for evening wear at least!

Alluring, sweet, wide-eyed Betty-Lou! She looks so little and so fragile—as if a fellow could pick her up in one arm and she could never get away. And there's a fascinating curl on her neck under one ear that a fellow could put his finger through, and pull out to its full straight length, and watch curl back again, if—if he could, that is!

But Don realizes that he hasn't the faintest idea what she is thinking behind those great soft eyes, and under that mop of curls that looks so careless, yet is so exquisitely kept and so beautifully arranged. He fears that if he touches her she may, indeed, as the soap bubble would, vanish.

So they are silent, and the honeysuckle sends up its fragrance about them, and the strains of a haunting waltz float out from the huge, brilliant room in the background to mingle with and lose themselves in the music of the far-off sea and the song that is trembling in two hearts, muted strains of love a-borning . . .

TO BE CONTINUED

NEXT: "CUPID WEEPS." On the Cover of the July 26th Issue
ON SALE ON ALL NEWSSTANDS JULY 23rd

A FREE COPY FOR EVERYONE

Begin now to collect the whole story in pictures of "Betty-Lou's Love Quest." Fill out the coupon below and inclose a two-cent stamp. Your copy of the cover picture will be sent to you immediately.

THE EDITORS,
ALL-STORY MAGAZINE,
280 Broadway, New York City.

Please send me, free, a two-tone reproduction of the cover of the July 12 issue, without type and suitable for framing.

Name _____

Address _____

_____

A two-cent stamp must accompany this coupon

Planets of Destiny

By CAROL YOUNG

BY the application of the scientific principles of astrology your questions will be answered in these pages. But the publishers of this magazine, and also the conductor of this department, do not hold themselves responsible for the accuracy of the replies, inasmuch as many readers furnish incorrect birth data and others do not know the hour of their birth. This department is conducted only for such help or interest as readers may obtain from it.

One question is allowed each reader. Question must be accompanied by coupon to be found at the end of this department. Please do not ask questions concerning death, speculation or the whereabouts of lost property.

It is very important that you give the following data: time of birth (hour of the day or night), date, month, year and place. Also sex.

No personal questions will be answered by direct mail, but if you will send ten cents in stamps to cover cost of mailing, All-Story will be glad to return to you a short estimate of your character and of the future influences for those in your Zodiacal sign, giving suggestions for at least the next two years.

DAILY ASTROLOGICAL GUIDE

July 16—This is not the sort of day anybody lies awake hoping for; go slow and stay with the procession if you can

July 17—Another of those poor days that few people like; the thing to do in a stretch like this is to take it slow and easy.

July 18—Somebody is your boss and whoever he or she may be, don't do anything to-day that would cause anger or distress; slightly better in P.M.

July 19—This is a good day for the majority, so try to get on the band-wagon and enjoy the fruits of honest toil in the past; use it to push ahead.

July 20—A favorable day for pleasant social affairs, but look out for temper, anger and mistakes in the evening.

July 21—Avoid running around in needless circles; three meals, a little work and some sleep is about all you can get out of this set of vibrations.

July 22—Don't buy anything; control optimism and don't try too hard to defend all your pet theories; others are apt to be the same way.

July 23—Money matters are not well aspected to-day, so be careful; best to avoid buying or obligating yourself; also weak socially.

July 24—Legal, partnership and matters related to decisions are poorly indicated; don't follow hunches unless you want to go wrong.

July 25—A fairly good day with those of the opposite sex; but it would be best to take no chances—be cautious in everything.

A WONDERFUL IDEA

Henry Ford had a wonderful idea when it occurred to him to make a dollar apiece, or whatever it was, on each car and he started out to make an auto for everybody in the world just as soon as he could. I can picture him sitting alone in his little log cabin (all great men start that way, I am told) thinking of how he could make the biggest possible success of himself.

He figured that everybody wanted to be somewhere else than where he or she happened to be at the time, and so he went to work on a means for transporting them from here to there and back to here again.

Now I enter the scene with the next greatest idea.

I sit alone in my palatial study, surrounded by horoscopes and charts of all kinds and I think to myself "What is it everybody wants?"

Then I pick up a basketful of letters written in to the magazine by a lot of interested readers and I see that every other letter in the batch is from somebody who wants to know "When will I marry?" So I take a week off and concentrate on locating a method whereby I can perform the universal service for all the unmarried people in the world. Me and Henry Ford.

Well, laugh if you want to, but I've got it!

So I am now making this important

ANNOUNCEMENT

From now on, right here, I shall give you the information you want on this important subject and in a way that makes it possible to hand out the information in wholesale quantities.

Think of it! Everybody gets an answer. No skipped questions on this subject!

There is only one little thing you must do, and that is make a slight change in the wording of your question. Instead of asking "When will I marry?" or "Whom shall I marry?" ask me this one:

"When should I marry?"

Here is the point. Anybody can marry at the wrong time if he or she has the mind to and can find some one of the opposite sex who is in agreement. And you'd be surprised how many people can be found who have agreed on this matter at the wrong times in their lives. If they had been doing it at the right times, things would have been, oh, so different! The thing you really want to know when you ask about that matter—marriage—is when to do it. It answers the question as to whether you have the right partner in view, for when the time is right, you could not be going out with the wrong person—you just simply wouldn't be vibrating that way. That's all there is to it, according to the laws of astrology.

So I am going to answer all of you like this from now on when I get a question from an unmarried person as to matrimonial choice:

WHEN SHOULD I MARRY?

Here is the list for this time. First the initials, then the birthday, and then the period during which matrimony can be successfully entered into by that person, if he or she wants to at the time. By the way, I am giving in each case the *next* good period for each person mentioned; there are none in between now and then, so don't ask me to change it and don't get the idea I have forgotten to look. Don't be in a hurry. It is better to wait than to be sorry.

Miss R. B., March 4, 1910, 8 P.M., March and April, 1931.

Miss R. H., September 6, 1908, October, 1932, April and May, 1933.

Miss E. A., October 18, 1900, January and September, 1934.

Miss J. D., October 3, 1909, October, 1933.

Miss C. W., April 12, 1915, February, May or October, 1936.

Miss A. R., January 31, 1912, October, 1933.

Miss V. K., August 24, 1904, August, 1932.

Miss E. M., December 8, 1909, 7 P.M., September, 1931, February or May, 1932.

Miss D. B., August 15, 1908, November, December, 1931, or June, 1932.

Miss M. K., November 1, 1903, July, 1930, February, 1931; but a much better time for you will be in October, 1934.

Miss E. L. S., April 17, 1903, 5 A.M., November, 1936.

Miss I. C., September 3, 1914, 5.30 A.M., January, 1937.

Miss E. K., March 21, 1910, 6 P.M., last half of July, 1931.

There you are. More next time. Don't forget—I have taken into consideration all you have told me and all the factors involved between now and the times mentioned for each of the foregoing. If you marry before the time I give in this list, you will be doing so without my consent and will be running many dangerous risks of a perfectly miserable existence thereafter.

There are a couple of bad emotional years ahead of you, Mrs. G. A., born March 4, 1897, beginning in 1933 and lasting through 1934, but you can do a great deal to make them easier than they would have been if you were not aware of what is going to be the matter.

It is like this: you will feel disappointed and discontented with everything your husband does at that time in the matter of business and occupational policies and may even think of him in some uncomfortable emotional way. You have not mentioned his birthday to me, or I could be sure about whether he will really be wrong when you come to this rough spot—all I am looking at is your horoscope. Yes, it looks as though you were doing as well as could be expected—referring to the fact that you are a farmer's wife.

This won't please, perhaps, D. M., born September 7, 1910, but that was not bad luck when the July 28, 1909a man walked out of your little affair. It looks big now, I dare say, because you are close to it. But if you could see it from where I sit, and where you will be sitting some day (referring to my advanced age and your present extreme youth), you would not feel as badly as you would have me believe. It was a real love, I know; but you are one of those people who seem to be entitled to more than one, which may explain why some of us have to go through life without any. What I see from here, with more perspective than you have on it right now, is that you and he never should have gone on. Sometimes these disappointments are for the best, and, in your case, such is emphatically the case. Why? You'll know when the next real love hits you, which will be after the middle of 1937.

Is March 6, 1907, your birthday, Mrs. B. M.? I suppose it is, but you do not make it very clear—the way you put it makes it possible that you are referring to your husband's birthday. Try not to be ambiguous. If it is your birthday, I can understand your statement that "since the day you met him he has never had a good position and has failed in business." It is not entirely your fault, except that you didn't know you have been under aspects of the planets that would hold him back. It is that way in married life; the planets of the wife are part of what the husband has to handle, and vice versa. One of the things we should all take into consideration before putting Mr. and Mrs. on the doorbell. 1936 will end it, one way or another. Grin and bear it till then. Refusing to take it hard will help in the meantime.

If you were born at exactly 4 P.M., or a little later, I. G., born December 31, 1914, you are on the wrong track trying to become a nurse. You can do well in connection with large public and political institutions and should prepare to deal extensively with the public, but you would be better off in something having to do with law or domestic science.

Everything has been against you for at least two years—I haven't looked back further than that—C. R. A. C., born September 9, 1902, 6 A.M., and I congratulate you that you have come through as well as you have. Many of your date have fared worse, as I happen to know. You are already out of the thickest of the battle, but there is still a little skirmishing yet to be handled before peace can be declared. Two more years, mostly emotional, and you will be given a temporary breathing spell. Grit your teeth.

Artistic or entertainment pursuits look good for you, M. G., born July 27, 1913, judging by your planetary positions. Could give you more if you had furnished the moment of your birth. Anyway, that ought to help; and keep away from mechanical and transportation lines, as far as occupation is concerned.

That comes under the heading of questions I can't answer, M. H. B., born October 17, 1913. You may and you may not learn the truth about the manner of your father's death. Sorry, try again.

Why not? There is nothing seriously wrong with your plans, P. S., born February 15, 1908.

Yes, indeed, E. K. M., born January 18, 1907, but don't expect to be entirely free from care and trouble for about a year and a half yet. But that doesn't mean you have to suffer from now till the end of 1931. Not at all. It just means you must work a little harder for the same results than you will have to after that for awhile.

Stick to business for at least four more years, Mrs. F. M., born April 18 (what year?). There is little hope of reaching a satisfactory marriage before 1935 for those born on your date in any year.

Something along inventing and mechanical lines, R. B., born April 4, 1914, with a view to getting into positions of responsibility as soon as you can.

Probably your husband will not return to you, Mrs. H. N., born January 18, 1908, but there are worse breaks than that—he might. And I am not trying to be funny, either. If he were to return, you would just have to learn all over again the lessons you are going through now. Take my word for it, if you can—I don't like to see people making life harder than it is for themselves. There are two kinds of trouble: the kind you can help and the kind you can't help. Make sure you don't go around trying to find it. If you were to take back a wandering husband before the end of 1932, you could be classified as among those missing on at least one cylinder. And by that time I have hopes you will know better.

"What is my future going to be?" asks L. F., born February 3, 1915. That, my dear child, is one which no astrologer on earth can answer. As far as I know, we are all making our futures with our own hands, our own minds and our own prayers. See that everything you do is a constructive and worthwhile act, or thought, or prayer, and I don't think the future will be of much bother to you. As to planetary influences for you, they are not at all bad for a number of years. You didn't expect me to read a hundred years for you, did you? This is work, and please give me credit for the little I do do.

"Have I a chance for something better?" asks A. B., born May 14, 1898, in Switzerland. How good do you want it? As far as I can see, you have been having things fairly well, according to astrology. I know plenty of people who would be willing to change places with you right now. Are you one of those women who just likes to feel miserable? Change your point of view and maybe you will see something different. Just what is it you are complaining about, anyway?

So you want peace? Where do you expect to find it, Mrs. M. G., born January 2, 1877, 5 A.M.? Perhaps you are not looking for it in the right place. If I tell you where it is, will you seek it there? I'll take a chance. It is within your own soul. You must compose the warring elements within you before you can get yourself together for the struggle with the outside world. Nine-tenths of all the trouble in this existence is within and can be avoided if we understand ourselves. I admit that you are going through a bad streak at present, but don't let it shake you. Cultivate the calm of the soul; you can get it from the teachings of your religion. If you haven't a religion, that is what's the matter with you. Get one, or study the one you already have.

A rather tempestuous passage is indicated for you, Mrs. M. A. R., born February 18, 1896, and your husband, born April 21, 1894, especially in 1933 and 1934, but you have selected wisely, nevertheless. You could have done much worse. What is that old line about half a loaf?

Mrs. J. E. W., born July 25, 1898, see the daily astrological calendar for when to move. Speaking in terms of months, any change you made not later than the spring of next year should be for your future good. That is if you are certain that rather obstinate and headstrong will of yours isn't leading you to make any wrong move.

"Will I ever be happy?" Capricorn people, Mrs. C. P., born January 16, 1895, don't usually have the best years of their life until toward middle age.

You might try any of these professions, Miss C. La B., born January 8, 1913: nurse, teacher, dressmaker, or milliner or secretary. You should have both diplomacy and executive ability, coupled with a charming personality. Why worry over careers for a few years yet?

THIS COUPON MUST ACCOMPANY EACH QUESTION ASKED

CAROL YOUNG
ALL-STORY MAGAZINE,
280 Broadway, New York City.

This coupon is not good after July 26. One question is allowed each reader.

Date of Birth..... ....., ... Time.....
MONTH DATE YEAR A.M. OR P.M.

Place..... Sex.....
MALE OR FEMALE

QUESTION:

.....

.....

Name.....

Street and No.....

City..... State.....

Handwriting and Happiness

By JOHN FRASER

JOHN FRASER, gifted handwriting expert, who has made a name for himself both in his native England and here in America, will analyze your handwriting. If you wish to know whether your sweetheart is the right man for you to marry, inclose samples of your own and your sweetheart's handwritings and address your letter to Mr. Fraser, care "Service for Sweethearts." If you wish his help in finding the profession for which you are best fitted, address him care "Your Career." For general reading, care "Character Analysis."

You may take advantage of one or any service, but a coupon must accompany each request for handwriting analysis. Coupon will be found at the end of this department.

Mr. Fraser bases his judgments on the scientific rules of graphology. In no case does he forecast the future or attempt to reveal the past. Scientific graphology undertakes only to reveal the inner secrets of your nature.

As many answers will be given on these pages as space permits. All other questions will be answered by mail. A stamped, addressed envelope must accompany your request for analysis.

THE numberless questions that come to me by mail from young and old, rich and poor, every day in my life leave me very often baffled. I wish many times I could give answers to them all, for I know they come from anxious inquirers who have lost "the road" in their journey through life.

I welcome every letter that is sent to me by readers of ALL-STORY, and I promise they will have my individual attention, but I will "draw the line" when it comes to answering questions such as these: "Will my boy friend ever love another woman?" "Can a man teach a woman to love him?" "What do you think of a man who persists in scattering cigarette ash all over the carpet when I tell him to be more careful?"

And so on, and so on.

To read all these questions takes so much valuable time, I feel justified in asking my correspondents to confine themselves to six or seven lines and their signature. This is all that is necessary, so just help me out. Won't you?

SERVICE FOR SWEETHEARTS

Although I have never had courage enough to send in
Eleanor
interesting enough for you to publish
Sam

(Miss Eleanor F., Indianapolis, Ind.) The reason for your "periodical tiffs" is plain to me, after analyzing your sweetheart's handwriting and then comparing it with your own. I don't doubt for a moment that Sam looks well, and has had a good upbringing, as you explain in your letter, but there are many other qualities required besides these before a young man can be considered a desirable mate for any girl. Let me tell you why I think you are not very well mated. Sam has been cursed with a very self-confident and domineering nature. Then again, he shows a tendency to be flirtatious. I'm sure you don't approve of that. Sam would always be ready and willing to set his cap for any member of the opposite sex who might happen along. I would call him a rather sporty, fun-loving youth. You, on the other hand, have a charm all your own. You have sane and sensible ways of looking at things. Your strong idealism places you in a class by yourself. You share in none of the gross materialism which unfortunately is Sam's meat and drink. He cares a great deal for the flesh pots. Before it is too late, you would be well advised to consider again.

long as the heart has passions
Mabel
tremors as a few months ago
of
Jim

(Miss Mabel J., Toronto, Ont.) A great gulf lies between you and Jim in the matter of natures. You two young people have really very little in common with each other. And such being the case you should be glad the break has come. Let me tell you why I think so.

By the slope of your penmanship I observe that you are extremely affectionate. You are generous, and self-sacrificing to the *n*th degree. In fact, you are never happy unless you are giving to others, and particularly to the one you love. Your high loops tell me that there is a constant urge in you to look for the best in people. You are optimism personified. Though you are by no means an angel, you have the faculty of cheering those around you by your sunny disposition.

When I look at Jim's handwriting, every curve and line indicates a strong deceitfulness. A fellow who can keep a straight face, and at the same time laugh "up his sleeve" at a girl. His tightly-closed "A's" and "O's," which are varying in size, point to cunning and trickery. The irregularity of the "T" bars is another unmistakable sign of this boy's undecided disposition. The little bars give him away at once. Jim has a very vacillating nature, and a character which could hardly be depended upon.

For two such natures as yours to expect matrimonial felicity would be as futile as trying to mix oil with water. I would advise you to comply with his own suggestion and "forget him."

do for the best in the near
Jessie
character as shown by my
Walter

(Miss Jessie C., Richmond, Va.) It is quite obvious to me that you are a very discreet girl when it comes to choosing a husband. Though Walter is no saint, at the same time he is a boy with many sterling qualities. He belongs to the type of men whose presence dominate. It matters little where he goes, people will stop and look at him, and ask who he is. I call that a distinctive personality. Coupled with this, I notice he has great will power.

A man like Walter is apt to get "spoiled," if you give in too much to his whims. Take note of this. He also impresses me as being self-important. He is inclined to carry his chin a little too high. Do your utmost to get him out of this habit before you get married. You'll never be able to do it after. By the formation of his "F's" I find he is not given to wasting his breath very much when sympathy is necessary. A woman's tears don't mean a thing to him. When you are married, and require money for a new dress, don't draw his attention to your poor wardrobe, and start sobbing over it. Make a frontal attack on his pocketbook without any humming or hawing, and he'll "come across" in a jiffy. Most men are built that way; they've got no use for "sob-sisters." Though I have confined myself to one or two of his weaknesses in this analysis, I want to say that Walter is the type of fellow who will make an ideal husband, for after all, actions speak louder than words. Now, regarding your own nature, your good qualities predominate. But more on this subject in my letter to you.

Analysis of the character of a letter from Mary; It Eddie

(Miss Mary B., Cleveland, Ohio) I see no reason in the world why you and Eddie should not be happy. He is a real "he-man," a fellow who has a heart big enough to more than take care of a little girl like you. In my opinion, your fiancé is cast in a large mold, and as a result he is destined to accomplish many worth while things in his lifetime. Of course, like all healthy red-blooded men, he is inclined to go off at a tangent and make foolish mistakes once in a while, but this is where your womanly prudence will be necessary. Since you ask me to be candid with you about his good and bad points, I take the liberty of telling you that though he is fond of you, he is also rather fond of himself. When you get married never forget that Eddie is the "head of the house." As soon as he crosses the threshold, he will expect you to remember that he is monarch of all he surveys. The more rope you give him, in this direction, the more he will love and respect you. He is also talkative, as doubtless you are aware, with leanings toward egotism. If you can break him of this habit by some deft method of your own, you are justified in patting yourself on the back, for I'm afraid that Eddie belongs to that class of men whose expenditure of speech is very often too great for his income of words. As far as you are concerned, you are a very womanly girl, capable of doing a good job as wife or mother.

YOUR CAREER

you are a specimen of

(Miss Sylvia McD., Hamilton, Ont.) A girl with your culture and analytical mind has a wonderful opportunity to make a name for herself in the legal profession. Your whole nature lends itself to this kind of work. For example, you are concentrative to a degree. Your power of penetration is acute. Your keenness of perception is above the average, and your memory would always be a splendid stand-by in an emergency. When it comes to reasoning out a problem, your logic is as sound as a bell, and your arguments would as a rule carry weight. Your small letters such as your "a's" and "o's" reveal to me how much deliberation you actually have. When I glance at your other characteristics I see many little weak corners in your nature which would be all the better to be looked after. For instance, you have very little patience with slow people. You are rather quick in using your tongue when some one differs with you. This is no liability as far as you are concerned. You will require all the keenness of a two-edged sword if you are to be an attorney in this country.

I shall be waiting

(Miss Julia D., Flint, Mich.) Your angular penmanship reveals to me that you have lots of business ability. Since office work appeals to you more than anything else, as you explained in your letter, I would strongly advise you to take another course in some business college. Knowledge is power, and proficiency in your work will mean much to you in the way of advancement. One cannot learn too much as far as up-to-date methods in of-

fice routine are concerned. I see that you have also been blessed with talents which might enable you to enter the literary world. You have imaginative power, and a certain keenness of perception which would stand you in good stead as a writer of fiction. Socially, you are a good mixer. Your straightforward and approachable manner will be of great assistance to you in your business career. In my opinion, you have a wonderful chance to succeed in your chosen profession, since it is only a matter of time before some busy executive will see your real worth and offer you a position of responsibility.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

from working for a

(Miss Annie E., Trenton, N. J.) I find that you are a girl with innate modesty. You have a sensible way of looking at things, which is responsible for your tranquillity of mind. You would never be guilty of pushing yourself to the front. Your very quietness is your power, and your diplomacy the secret of your popularity. They say that still waters run deep, and this expresses your true character. It's strange, but nevertheless a fact, that a woman of your temperament always gets what she wants without ruffling the feathers of her friends. I see by your beginning strokes that you would never have any patience with those gallant Romeos who run after you, and invite you to dinner and a show. Since you are not of the emotional type, nine times out of ten those young cake-eaters would bore you to death with their airs and palaver. Of course, there is always a danger of carrying this cool and select mannerism a little too far. No one cares very much about being associated with a human iceberg. Despite your aloofness, you are a girl with many commendable qualities, and one who ought to do well in the business as well as the social world.

they took so eagerly

(Miss Virginia H., Peoria, Ill.) You have many inherent qualities in your nature which ought to be real assets to you in the business world. To a certain extent, however, they are neutralized by other things, which are not so commendable. For instance, you have a rather cool way of treating those around you. You assume a superior sort of air, and do your darnedest to impress people with your importance. I grant that you are a cultured person, and one who knows the classics and the poets. But, Virginia, you ought to remember that other folks are just as smart as you. They might not have all the "ologies" at their finger tips as you perhaps have, but most of them make up their deficiencies by acquiring a double portion of plain gumption which is better sometimes than all the book learning in the world. In summing you up, I believe you are a very nice girl, and one who would prove to be a conscientious friend and companion, once that mask of superiority was removed.

THIS COUPON AND A STAMPED ADDRESSED ENVELOPE MUST ACCOMPANY REQUEST FOR ANALYSIS.

JOHN FRASER,
ALL-STORY MAGAZINE,
280 Broadway,
New York City.

This coupon is not good after July 26. A stamped addressed envelope must be inclosed when forwarding.

I enclose handwriting specimen for
—Service for Sweethearts.
—Your Career.
—Character Analysis.
(Check which you prefer. One coupon must accompany each choice.)

Name.....

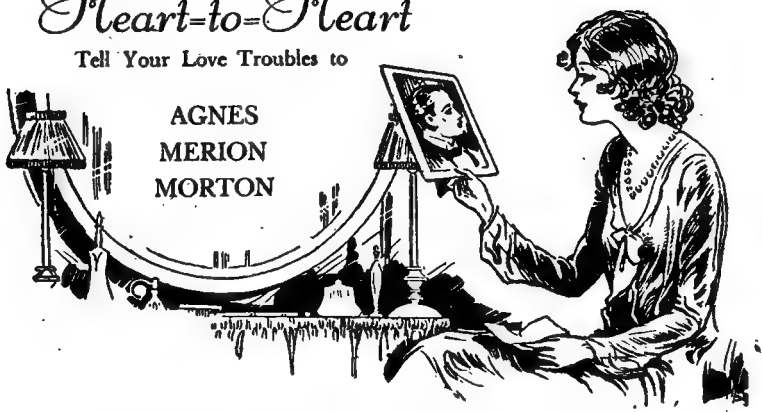
Street and No. .....

City..... State.....

Heart-to-Heart

Tell Your Love Troubles to

AGNES
MERION
MORTON



MRS. MORTON wants you to feel that she is a friend—some one to whom it is a comfort to tell your problems, who will advise and encourage you in your struggle for happiness, and who is always here to help. She is interested in you. Write to her freely, addressing your letter care All-Story Magazine, 280 Broadway, N. Y. C.

Every letter is confidential.

As Mrs. Morton receives so many letters, she cannot publish answers to all in the space allotted to her. Some, therefore, are answered by mail. Be sure to enclose a stamped, addressed envelope with your question.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

One of your letters a while ago said, "It is not easy to be the daughter of a prominent man," and I thought how true that is. Many people envy me my position, but they do not know. I was brought up in a poor family, but married into a rich one. My husband and I are happy in each other, and in our two children, but we live with his people and things are very uncongenial.

My mother-in-law is an invalid, and peevish, and my father-in-law is a disagreeable, fault-finding, domineering man. He has bossed Frederick (my husband) so all his life that he does not dare call his soul his own, he has never ventured to strike out in business for himself, except once, when he failed. Now he simply takes care of his father's estate, and in return we are housed and fed, and the children are sent to expensive private schools.

We live in a big house—over thirty rooms, one a reception hall as large as two ordinary bungalows, and have four maids, a cook, a gardener, a chauffeur, and usually a nurse. Because my mother-in-law is sick I run the house, which is not so easy as you might think. We have a great deal of servant trouble because the old people are so hard—so impossible, rather, to please. Last month, for instance, we changed the cook three times in ten days, and the maids are always getting mad and leaving without notice. I can't blame them, but it makes things very hard for me; sometimes I think it would be easier to do the work myself.

My father-in-law keeps all the money in his own hands and pays all the bills, after growling about them, particularly about clothes. He gives Frederick a beggarly allowance for spending money, as if he was a little boy, and we do see some plays and concerts, of course, although I have to spend most of it going to the city to interview help. Every one thinks I ought to be so happy, but they do not know.

My husband and I have talked over the way out many times, but it seems hopeless. If we left here and got a home of our own he would be lucky to find a position at thirty-five or forty a week, and even if we could face poverty and struggle for ourselves, how could we face it for our children? They are accustomed to every luxury. I used to be a music teacher, but gave up my music when we were married, twelve years ago. Our girl is eleven,

our boy eight. I doubt if I could help out by taking pupils now, and I really don't see how we could get along. Besides, as Frederick says, there is so much at stake. If we angered the old man by leaving his roof, he would probably leave his money to charity and some distant relatives. Please don't think we are terrible to think about the money, but it *is* important.

I do not mean to complain, either, but want you to understand. I am willing to keep the house, and try my best, but it is hard never to get a word of praise or encouragement—just scoldings and criticism all the time. He tells me I am no good, am vain, extravagant, useless. And yet it is a full-time job to run a house the size of this one, and besides I do many extra little things like preparing my mother-in-law's food (she usually cries into it and spoils it!) and helping the children with their lessons, and mending my daughter's finest clothes. People think we are rich, whereas we are really poor because we have no say about anything, have hardly a nickel to spend as we wish, and must sink our personalities in a dictatorial old man's. Do you think we should never have come here to live, Mrs. Morton? Was it weak? At the time it seemed the only thing to do, although we might have been able to attempt to get along by ourselves, before the children came. But it's too late now. Only, things seem intolerable, and they get worse and worse. *What can we do?*

DISTRACTED BARBARA.

Barbara, do you think there are many people in the world who do not have to earn what they get, one way or another? If there are, one seldom hears of them. You have a job, and a big one, I grant you, but to an outsider, considering the advantages you get for it, it does not seem too unfair. I believe that if you will approach your job from a different angle you can make things better all around.

First of all, it seems to me you should have a serious talk with your father-in-law, and *ask his advice* about improving your methods. The man does not live who would not be pleased and flattered by such a request—and he might have something helpful to say, too, instead of all this fault-finding. Perhaps he knows some one who apparently manages a big house better than you do, and would suggest your getting together with that person and learning how she does it. Or perhaps you could get a book out of the library, or look up articles in the magazine (the *Reader's Guide* lists everything that appears in periodicals) on household management. Any intelligent librarian could give you a selection of such printed matter, the results that other women have worked out in just such problems. Make a study of your job, instead of just muddling along from day to day, doing your best, true, but not doing it in the best way. Find out exactly what is right and just to spend on certain things; come to an understanding with the old man about an allowance for each necessary item of expenditure, and keep within that allowance—or, if practice proves it is impossible to do so, go to him and explain why. I am sure there is a way to have more peace and order in your life, if you can only find it.

You will have to be patient and wise, I know; have to keep up a continual effort to maintain your poise; you will have to act as buffer between the old couple and the staff of help. But you are blessed in having a thoroughly understanding husband, and in your children. They have opportunities beyond the average; in the nature of things you will be a rich woman some day, and why shouldn't you have to earn your money?

Then, if I were you, I'd take up my music again, and take it up seriously. You must have gone pretty far with it if you were able to earn your living by teaching, and I am sure that it would please the old man to have you work at it steadily again, and that it would be a refuge to yourself. Moreover, should the worse come to the worst some day, you will have automatically fitted yourself to take your place in the working world once more, and to help your husband, handicapped as he may be, to support his family. Only, for your own sake and the sake of the children, I hope you will never leave your parents-in-law while there are hard feelings between you. Wait until things are pleasant, whatever develops, and then move into your own home in such a manner that intercourse between it and the big house is still possible.

Undecided, Texas—My letter to you was returned marked "Box Not Rented," so I will try to answer here. You have analyzed your own case so well that I am sure you know the answer yourself. B. is not the sort to make any woman happy. You do not really love *him*, not the "selfish, stingy" sort he has shown himself to be, unreliable, inconsiderate, but only your own ideal of what he could and ought to be. Most of that ideal is founded on his good looks, I'm afraid.

The other is all that is desirable in a man, but unless your own heart can tell you that it is better to wait. I hope you will in time come to appreciate him and love him as he deserves to be loved, but first you will have to conquer this infatuation. And I believe you can do that if you have the courage to refuse to see B. any more, if you steadily believe that you will get over him, and if you keep the excellent qualities of "the bachelor" before your eyes. It would be better not to

marry any one while your feelings are so unsettled, but you know and I know that if you married B. you would bitterly regret it before the year is out. He never shows you even the shadow of consideration, and a man is always less considerate of his wife than he is of his sweetheart. So there's not much hope for him, is there? Nor for the woman who marries him.

The following letter might have been written to you.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I have just read Agnes of Milwaukee's letter, and it interested me very much, as I had an experience very much like it, and also come from Milwaukee. I had a good-looking boy friend who, as they say, kept company steady for over a year with me. He was very popular with other women, because of his good looks and "winning ways." He said often that he loved me, but he would break a date and go out with others whenever he felt like it. No healthy-minded girl can stand that.

If this letter is printed, and if you see it, Agnes of Milwaukee, remember this. I got rid of that kind of man and have found another. I find now I love this one far better than I ever could have loved the other, because *I can trust him.* A man like that would never make you happy, so please, for your own sake, forget him. I know there are lots of nicer boys in Milwaukee!

EX-HAZEL OF MILWAUKEE.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

My story is so long that I don't know whether you'll have room to print it, but anyway I have to explain fully if I'm going to explain at all. If you publish this, I hope you will do it in such a way that no one can guess my identity.

I was married when I was sixteen, and I thought I loved my husband as much as anybody could. I guess I did, too—as much as any girl of sixteen could. I had a baby, a little girl, before I was seventeen. We never got along very well. My husband was only a boy, and he didn't make much money; he began to go with wild fellows and drank and gambled some, and finally I took the baby home to my mother for her to take care of while I went to work. He lived at our house a while, but my father and mother were always nagging him, and by and by he quit. He asked me to come with him, while he went to the city and got a better job, but I was afraid to. I have often thought I made a mistake. After a while my people persuaded me to get a divorce for desertion. Then my little girl died. It seemed as if I couldn't bear to live in that place any more, so I came to the city, too, and got a job being housekeeper and nursemaid for a lovely woman. She and her husband were very good to me, and I learned to love her children—darling twin boys—as if they were my own.

That is almost four years ago. Just before Christmas last year the lady died, and when she was dying she called me in and asked me to stay and look after her babies, and marry her husband if he wanted me to. She was so pitiful that I didn't know what I was doing. It seemed to me that I'd say anything to help her to die happy, so I promised. There didn't seem to be anything more for me in life, anyway.

On the 9th of January—it was a Friday, my day off; because my employer is home that day (he works for a milk company and is busy Sundays) I met my husband on the street. I call him my husband—I still feel that he is. Without knowing it, really, I had loved him all the while. He is grown up now, and looks every inch a man. He told me he had been to my home town looking for me, but my people would not tell him where I was. He said he had always wanted to come back, but had failed at one thing after another and never had the money to "do right by me." Now, however, he has a good job and has made good at it, and he wants to get married again and start over.

I told him how I was situated, and he said if I loved the other man he'd just drop out of sight, but if I didn't he didn't want me to marry him, even if he asked me. It wasn't very long before he did ask me, although he said we'd have to wait until fall at least for appearances' sake. I told him about my husband, and he seemed to think that I should keep my promise to his wife. Since then he has asked me many times, and begged me to name the day. I went out with my husband sometimes, then I found I was learning to love him more with every time I saw him, so stopped.

Now, Mrs. Morton, I have always been taught that a promise made to the dead is sacred, and it is true that I love the children and hate to think of parting with them. They are just ready to start to school now, and they call me "mother"—their own mother was always "mamma," and I know it would be like losing their own mother all over again if I left them. Leland, their father, says that my husband was a bum before, and "once a bum always a bum." He says he may seem to have straightened up, but after he got me back he would sink down again. He says that we know each other pretty well, having lived in the same house so long, and that we have more chance of happiness than my husband and I would have. In addition to this, I have caused myself to be talked about by staying and keeping house for him since his wife died.

Mrs. Morton, what am I to do? I lie awake night after night, and I can't see what is right. I don't love Leland; I like him, and that's about all. But I promised his wife, and I love the little boys. It would break my heart to leave them. On the other hand, there's my husband. I don't believe he would go back and be the way he was before. He loves me yet, more than ever, and I love him. On Memorial Day he drove me back to our home town, and we went to visit the baby's grave together. My brother met us, and after

we had dinner together he drove back to the city with us. And he told me he thinks my husband is fine—he never had any use for him before—and he went and talked to some of the people he works with, and they all think the sun rises and sets in him. Doesn't it sound to you as if he has really "straightened up"? It was hard for him to bring me home that night—he said he wanted to take me somewhere and get married right away. But he did bring me home, and kissed me good night just once, and said he wouldn't come again until I had made up my mind.

So there you have the whole story, I don't think I've left out anything important. What is right to do?

LESSIE.

Follow your own heart, Lessie—the woman-and-wife part of your heart, not the mother part. After all, if you marry your husband again you will probably have babies of your own some day to console you for giving up the two little fellows who are so dear to you now. They are not your own; you owe them no duty; they will forget, and I'm sure their father will find another mother for them when he is no longer thrown constantly with you.

It certainly does seem that your husband has truly reformed; probably he was so young when you were married that he had not had his "fling," so you suffered for it. I like what you say of him; I like his attitude on the situation more than the other man's. As for the promise made to the dying woman—Lessie, do you suppose that, knowing the circumstances, she would insist on your keeping it now? The dead are dead; they have had their life; there is no reason why they should impose their will upon the living, nor interfere with any one's happiness and liberty. She married the man of her choice; what right has she to stand between you and the man of yours? It sounds as if you and your husband are truly mated; you lost each other once, and now come together again in your maturity and still desire each other. What better proof than that could there be that your love was founded on reality? As for the gossip that is talked about you, that need not affect you either way. You have laid yourself open to some misconstruction by staying in Leland's house under such circumstances, of course, although there was nothing inherently wrong in your doing so. But the dealers in small scandal always find something to talk about, and so long as your husband loves and trusts you, and so long as you yourself know you were doing right by staying with the motherless children, you can look the world in the face. But there is no reason why you should sacrifice the happiness of your whole life, as you would be doing by marrying a man you don't love, in order to be true to a mistaken idea.

An Old Favorite Returns

In the next issue of this magazine, on the stands July 23, will be a big new story by a much loved ALL-STORY author. Remember "Love Stronger Than Death," by Floria Howe Bruess? Miss Bruess has written another love epic of the North with thrills galore. She calls it "Love Takes the Trail."

Watch for it—in the July 26 issue of ALL-STORY

The Lonesome Club

Conducted by DOROTHEA DALE

MAKE friends! Join the Lonesome Club and soon you will be getting more letters than any one you know.

Here's how to do it: if you wish your letter published in these pages write to Mrs. Dale, care of ALL-STORY, *280 Broadway, New York City, and describe yourself. Try to make it as interesting as possible—tell little things about yourself that will make others want to write to you.*

If you wish to communicate with the pals whose letters appear here, inclose your letter in a plain, stamped envelope and send it to Mrs. Dale. No letters will be forwarded without the extra stamp.

If you are a girl, you may write to other girls; if a man, to other men.

Please do not ask for the address of any one.

DEAR MRS. DALE:

I would appreciate it very much if you would print my little "ad" in your correspondence corner. I am a French girl of twenty-one, and I like to receive letters and to write them. Weight one hundred and ninety and five feet seven in height.

From girls I would like to hear,
From far or near.

Have brown hair and eyes, light complexion and fairly good-looking. So come, girls, all be sports. Take out your pen and write to

SUNSHINE OF MASS.

May I join your Lonesome Club? I'm twenty years old in July, five feet five and a half, with brown hair, curly, and gray-blue eyes. Love dancing, and took it up quite steadily until I married. Have been married two years and have a baby girl ten months old. I'd like very much to hear from any one who cares to write. You may sign me as—

CHRISTMAS CAROL.

If you would like to add my name to your Lonesome Club, you are at liberty to do so. Here are the details: I am an author, explorer, lecturer—you know the type because many of them come to America every year. I am an Anglo-Irishman, forty years old and single, and have done a great deal of exploring—and fighting—in different parts of the world. Some of your correspondents write that they would like to correspond with a fellow abroad. I have just come back to London, but have arranged a lecture tour for next winter in the United States, so shall be returning in December. I like the idea of your club and the magazine very much. You must pick out the pieces you wish to publish from this letter. My *nom de plume* is

PLUS FOUR P.

I have been reading your column in ALL-STORY and am very much interested. I would like to hear from pen pals from all over the world. I am a young married girl fifteen years old, and have leisure in which to answer all mail. Hoping to hear from my pals soon,

DOROTHY OF WISCONSIN.

I am only a lonesome Iowa lassie, longing for pen pals all over the world. I am a sophomore in high school, have brown wavy hair, blue eyes, and am five feet four. I love dancing, roller skating, and all sports.

Now come one and all and sling some of your ink my way, for I have lots of stamps.

MADELINE OF IOWA.

I am seventeen, have light brown hair, hazel eyes, and weigh one hundred and twenty-nine. Am five feet seven and termed not bad-looking. I am in a strange town and know no one, so would like some pen pals to help out the situation. I like dancing, and sports of all kinds, especially swimming. Get out your pens and paper, girls, and write to me. I promise to answer all letters.

BABE, Vermont.

I am a girl of sixteen, five feet two, a golden blonde with grayish blue eyes, and one thing, I think is quite out of place, my black eyebrows. I ride every Sunday, dance, play tennis and golf. I love all sports, as well as corresponding with pen friends. I think some girls will have time to write to

PEE WEE, Ontario.

Won't somebody write to a lonesome blonde? I love to write letters and will promise to answer all I receive. I suppose you want to know what I look like. I am a blonde with brown eyes, five feet four, sixteen years old. I like sports and am outdoors most of the time. So come on, everybody, and write to me.

A hope-to-be pen pal, LILLIAN OF INDIANA.

I would like to have some girls around fourteen years old write. I am five feet two, have rather light brown hair and soft brown eyes. I love all outdoor sports, also pets. I will be glad to send pictures of some of my pets, also of myself. I love dancing and swimming, and I play tennis fairly well. I like people who are fair and square. Won't some one please write to a lonely girl?

V. M. C., Wisconsin.

Howdy, folks! Here's just another little boy of thirteen looking for lots of pen pals. I am four feet ten, and have brown hair and blue eyes. I am interested in all sports, especially boxing, as my brother is a boxer. I aim to get nearer heaven than most folks, as I intend to be a steeplejack. Will exchange snaps with all who write, so everybody haul out the old pen and throw a few lines to

THE UNTAMED TERROR OF THE PLAINS.

Hello, members of the Lonesome Club! I am lonesome, but hope none of you are as lonesome as I am. I am a boy of seventeen, and have dark brown hair and blue eyes. I am fond of all kinds of sports, such as dancing, skating, and swimming. Will exchange snaps with all who write to

VAL OF SASKATCHEWAN.

I wonder if another lonesome person could join your club? I am twenty-one, have dark brown hair and eyes. I have traveled all over the U. S. A., so I can write some interesting letters. My hobbies are swimming, riding, hunting, and the movies. So hurry and get me lots of pen pals!

GIRL FROM THE RICHEST HILL ON EARTH.

I am a married woman twenty-seven years old, with a darling little girl of three. I can't say I am so lonely, but would surely love to have lots of pals. I think I can promise interesting and prompt answers to all who care to write. Won't every one from twenty to thirty-five please write? Please, Mrs. Dale, let me see this in print and see how many true pals I can get.

VAL OF CALIFORNIA.

I have had to return home to Canada from New York, so I am greatly in need of friends. I am a musician and author. I play piano, violin, 'cello, tennis, and like swimming and dancing. I am twenty-three, and interested in everything a young fellow that age might be. So, boys, all together write me and let me prove how I can write letters.

A BUDDY TO EVERYBODY.

Won't you let me in? I am so lonely. I love to write and receive letters. I am very blond, blue eyes, fair skin, twenty-eight years old. You can put me in as

JUST GOLDIE.

I am looking for pen pals, and would like everybody from fifteen to eighteen to write to me. I am not lonesome, but like to receive and write letters. I am seventeen, five feet eight, one hundred and twenty-five pounds, light brown hair, brown eyes. My favorite hobbies are joy-riding, music, steel guitars, and swimming. Also can tell nearly all about the Hawaiian Island of Oahu. Love to answer all letters and exchange snapshots.

ARTHUR OF PARADISE.

I am a girl not quite five feet tall, weigh ninety-six and one-half pounds, and have dark brown curly hair and brown eyes. I have a clear complexion and am considered not bad-looking. I like to dance and go to the movies, but most of all I like to read. Like Private Bill, I like to read anything from the lightest fiction to the deepest classics. I would like to have some one who has traveled or is now traveling write to me, as I am most interested in that. I am a stenographer and expect to save enough to do so some day. I should be glad to exchange snapshots with any who write. All between seventeen and thirty write to me and help cure my loneliness.

VIRGINIA OF MICHIGAN.

I would appreciate it very much if every one would write to me. I'm a girl of thirteen, five feet two, with dark blue eyes and golden hair, very wavy. I am not homely.

LONELY BIGGIE, S. D.

Nobody likes to hear of a lonely person, do they? I am a young married girl of twenty with a ten months' old baby. I was born and raised in New York City and am now living

on a big, lonely farm. Was always an up-to-date flapper and love dancing. I am only a farmerette, and would love to have some pen pals. Toodle-oo till I hear from you.

PEGGY OF NEW YORK.

May I join your Lonesome Club? I am twenty, have curly auburn hair, dark brown eyes, am five feet four, and weigh one hundred and twenty. I am alone with my mother, who owns a tourist camp, and I run the gas station. I meet many people every day and have many friends, but would like to have many more. Come on, all you pen pals and travelers, tell me of your adventures. Let's see how well you can fill my mail box. Who knows but I may meet some of you this summer? I wish your department loads of success, Mrs. Dale. Congratulations!

MAMIE OF "THE ROYAL GEORGE."

I would like to correspond with lots of pen pals. I am seventeen, six feet tall, have gray-blue eyes and dark hair. I am a Canadian and need some pen pals. I like practically all sports, like movies, and am particularly fond of flying, so let's hear from some of you aviation hounds. Some day maybe I could fly down and see my pen pals. Get going, fellows, and make contact with me. I promise to answer all letters and will exchange photos.

THE CANADA KID.

I just love lots of friends, so would like to receive letters from girls all over the world. I am a stenog, nineteen years old, five feet two, and weigh one hundred and twenty-six. I have dark hair and eyes. Every one write to me. I like all kinds of sports and dancing.

FRENCHY, Michigan.

I am a girl of eighteen, five feet two, auburn hair and dark eyes. I am considered attractive. I long to travel, but not having the opportunity as yet, I hope to be satisfied by hearing from the places I have never been. Hoping many around my own age will hear my plea,

SUGAR.

I would like to join your Lonesome Club, and hope you will publish my letter. Come on, you chance-taking people, and write to me. I am a daredevil by profession, wing-walking on a plane, parachute jumping, rope-ladder changing. I am out of the game for a while, due to an accident. If you've got the nerve I've got surely you will write me.

DARE DEVIL OF NORTH CAROLINA.

I lost the only pal I had recently when I lost my mother, and I feel confident that you can get some one to write to me. I'm a chief steward in the merchant service, and I have been in every country in the world. I feel sure that some of the members of the Lonesome Club would like to know how the other half of the world lives, and what they do. I'm very fond of all sports, dancing, and a good time. I'm five feet eight, weigh one hundred and sixty, complexion ruddy. Hair and eyes brown, and I'm not hard to look at—that is, my face will pass anywhere. Would like to hear from any one from fifteen to eighty, and I assure you that I will answer all letters and exchange pictures. I will send to the first dozen who write some beautiful presents from various parts of the world.

CHIEF STEWARD.

I have recently been initiated to your fine magazine and am anxious, like other members of your club, to make new friends. I am twenty-one, and would like to hear from other girls my age or older. I am five feet six, weigh one hundred and twenty-five, have dark brown hair and brown eyes. As to the things I am interested in, they are too numerous to mention. I like everything the normal modern girl of to-day does. I love to make friends and would gladly answer every letter I get—the more the merrier! I might add that I am employed as secretary in a well-known large city in New England. I have lots of time on my hands, so I hope to have plenty of letters to answer. I will gladly exchange photos with any who care to write. The very best of luck to your club and splendid magazine.

RUTH.

I get very lonesome because I live in a small town. I am twenty-three years old and married—have three boys, but I have plenty of time to write to pen pals. I love music and to read, and go to the movies. So fill my mail box, and I will promise to answer every one.

BERNICE OF KANSAS.

I am a fond lover of receiving letters from all friends who will write to me. I am a lover of books, also like to decorate halls, churches, and bazaars. It is fun to make all kinds of flowers and draperies. I also like to paint scenery and flowers, to make up poems or songs. I am a fond reader of all kinds of books and magazines, and am also making albums of movie stars and plays. I love to act on the stage, also to take the leader's part, to make people up and put them through. I am tall, dark brown hair and eyes, fair complexion, weigh one hundred and twenty-five. Am married, and twenty-seven years old. I assure you all who write that I will try to write an interesting letter back, will exchange snaps or pictures with all who want to.

TOM OF NEW JERSEY.

I like having correspondents. I have them in different places, though none from America. I talk with an American twang, which surprises my friends as I am a South African. I am seventeen, fairly dark, and quite tall.

AUDREY OF SOUTH AFRICA.

Hello, everybody! I'm just another girl of seventeen, with green eyes and light brown hair, and five feet five. Sounds terribly unattractive, doesn't it, but really I'm not so

bad when you get to know me. I am not actually lonesome, but get a great kick out of writing letters, and a greater one in receiving them. Please cooperate with me and make my mailman earn his money. I like all sports, but dancing is my favorite. I would love to be a real artist or an aviatrix (is that the way you spell it?) some day, but at present am just a stenographer. Would like to have a real pal a couple of years older than myself. Will exchange snaps with all who write to

BROWNIE.

In Memoriam

MY DEAR MRS. DALE: Palm Beach, Fla.

Several letters have come here for little Castilian Vagabond.

Little Vagabond has passed into a better world, Mrs. Dale. The doctors said heart trouble. Yes, it was, but not the way they meant, for she died of a broken heart. Her husband was lost at sea last February, and it was only a year ago that her father, Don Ramon Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, and his wife and son were killed. That was the last of her people, so you can understand, I am sure, that she wasn't sorry to go.

May I say how happy the letters from your club people made her? They were all so interested in Spain, and it tickled her to death for them to overlook what she called her poor English.

I have lost the dearest friend on earth, Mrs. Dale.

LITTLE VAGABOND'S FRIEND.

Reader's Choice Coupon

Help the editors select just the kind of story you like best by telling them which story in this issue appealed most to you.

This coupon and four others from previous or future issues will enable you to obtain free an original illustration in this issue. Just inclose five coupons in your letter and a drawing will be forwarded to you.

THE EDITORS,
ALL-STORY MAGAZINE,
280 Broadway, New York City.

Here is my opinion of the stories in this issue:

Love's Derby .....

Nora Makes Bold .....

Her Bartered Beauty .....

The Battle of Flowers .....

Glad Rags .....

The Price of Her Dreams .....

A Real Life Romance .....

Love at a Glance .....

The Green-Eyed Monster .....

My favorite authors are .....

Name .....

Address .....

(Name and address may be omitted, if desired)